THE MAGAZINE THAT HELPS YOU **EXPLORE YOUR ROOTS**

BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING FAMILY HISTORY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 231 JUNE 2025 £5.75

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

FINDING LONDON RECORDS ONLINE

GET MORE FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

How TikTok, Facebook, X and YouTube can help break down your family history brick walls

WW1 AIR RAIDS

One man's quest to trace the forgotten victims

I uncovered my father's miraculous escape from Poland during WW2

MIDLANDS KIN

Find records online and in the archives

FRENCH CONNECTION

Fred Sirieix's researcher shares her expert tips

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- The horrors of the Victorian slums
- A new AI tool to fix damaged photos
- Irish railway staff records online

DISCOVER THE WHOLE PICTURE

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Welcome

Sarah's Top Tip

Look out for dropped and added 'H's in records with Londoners' names

I loved reading about Rob Earnden's hunt for his East London ancestors in our 'Reader Story' this month (**page 24**). He encountered a common problem when dealing with a surname that starts with a vowel in London. It may come as no surprise that Londoners tend to drop an 'H' from the start of a name, but did you know that they also used to overcompensate in a formal or official situation, and add an 'H' to a name that begins with a vowel? So, when Rob was looking for an Earnden, he found that the birth was registered under the name 'Hearnden'. So experiment when looking for those East London forebears!

I love using Facebook to share photos, milestones and opinions with friends and family, but recently I've been getting more and more interested in genealogy Facebook Groups. It made me realise that social media platforms and how we use them are changing, making them genuinely useful tools for family historians. I suspect that few of us are reaping the full benefits of social media when it comes to researching our family history. Luckily we've got social media guru and genealogist Kelly Cornwell to offer us guidance (**page 14**).

We've also got the inspiring story of one man's mission to uncover the names of all of the victims of German air raids on Britain during the First World War (**page 18**). I so admire the tenacity and ingenuity of people like Ian, and I hope that some of his research tactics will inspire other readers. Please do share your own research projects with us – I loved reading about the transcription project run by members of the Sussex Family History Group on **page 51**. It's another great example of how a Facebook Group can help.

Finally, I hope you're enjoying the latest series of *WDYTYA?*. For those of you with French ancestry, the researcher for Fred Sirieix's episode shares some tips on **page 28**… and if Layton Williams' discoveries inspire you to dig deeper into your London roots, then turn to **page 35** for some handy online resources. Happy hunting!

Sarah

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Contributors

Kelly Cornwell
A professional genealogist based on the border of Suffolk and Essex, Kelly is an experienced tutor who shares expert advice from her social media course on **page 14**.

Ian Castle
Ian's project to name all of the victims of the First World War air raids in the UK has led to a trilogy of books on the subject. Turn to **page 18** to find out how he found 'the forgotten'.

Ian Waller
After many years as a professional genealogist, Ian still plays an active role in the world of family history. On **page 38** he explores online records of Irish railway workers.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/TWO WOMEN WITH THEIR HAIR IN CURLERS, c1960

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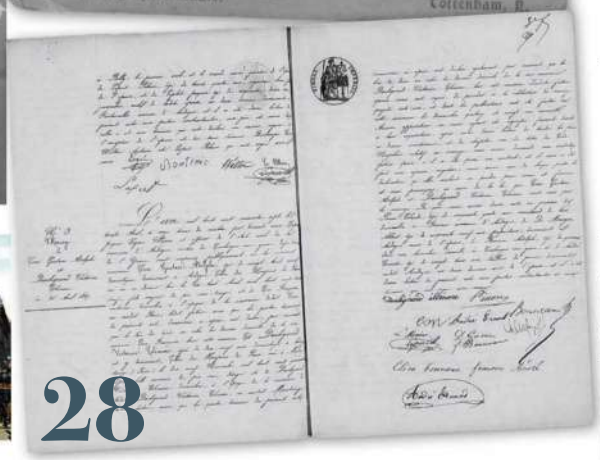

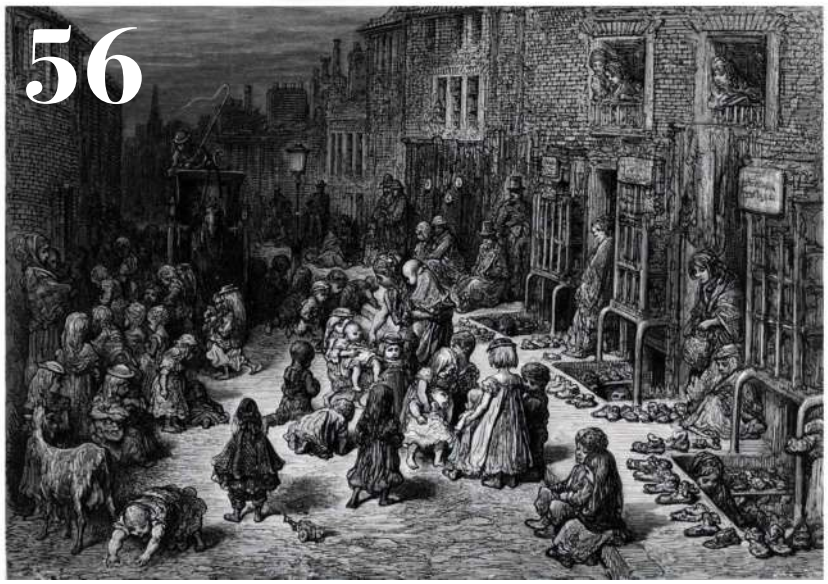

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Write to *WDYTYA? Magazine*, Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST

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The writer of our star letter wins an AncestryDNA test **worth £79** – so drop us a line and share your thoughts with us.

Social Media Is A Great Tool For Genealogy

STAR LETTER

When I became hooked on genealogy, as someone who grew up with tech, social media was an obvious tool for me. I realised quickly though through reading blogs, websites and magazines (including this one) that nobody talks about this. For anyone who has a tech/social media aversion, don't skip ahead! Hear what I have to say, and how you could still make this incredible resource work for you.

Take Facebook (**facebook.com**) for example. Facebook has a wealth of Groups run typically by a couple of volunteer admins. These are groups of tens of thousands of people just like you, of all ages, happy to help each other. I can't count the number of times I've posted "Hi everyone, can you help me read this dreadful handwriting", and had Good Samaritans transcribe anything from a single word through to entire letters, posting their contribution in the comments.

I've had people help break down brick walls, and I've helped others break down theirs. A quick type of 'genealogy' in Facebook's search bar will bring up some popular Groups to join, and there are site-specific ones too, dedicated to the likes of Ancestry, MyHeritage and Find a Grave, that are great for help and news (although the admins are transparent in saying that they're not officially affiliated with the firms).

There are local Groups to join, eg 'Kent – Ancestors & Genealogy' and 'Wirral in Old Photographs'. Members of the Kent Group helped point me to the relevant archives or websites to find what I needed, or clarify the geography or migration habits relevant to my ancestors. In the Wirral Group, I found that somebody had added a photo of my great grandfather from the time of Elizabeth II's coronation *(see above)*.

Rob found a photo of his great grandfather Arthur Bruce Earnden *(centre)* on Facebook

There are military history Groups where people can give you a wealth of information about your ancestor's service from a single photograph, while the members of 'Unidentified Photos of the British Isles' can help you identify where a picture was taken based on what they can see in photograph.

If you've never used Facebook before, there are no rules to say you have to add your friends or family (or even tell them you've joined), add photos, or even use your real name (so long as you aren't impersonating anybody). You can create an account just to aid your research. Many groups also allow you to post anonymously. If you still wish to avoid Facebook, there are other sites. Reddit (**reddit.com**) is one, and its version of Groups are forums called 'subreddits'. At the time of writing the 'Genealogy' one has 165,000 members.

Using social media is a free and easily accessible way to help your research. I'd recommend it to anyone.

Rob Earnden, Toton

> Using social media is a free and easily accessible way to help your research

Editor Replies **What excellent timing Rob! Your email arrived just as we were finalising the layout for Kelly Cornwell's wonderful article about this very topic on page 14, and I'm sure that your words will also help to inspire other readers.**

A Vision Of Dolly

What an interesting article "Visions of the Future" was in your April issue. It got me thinking about a photograph in our family album of my aunt Dolly working at Olympia when Queen Mary was being shown round in 1949. Attending Olympia has featured a lot through my family generations but not always to visit, more for work. My maternal grandparents lived just a few streets from Olympia and their daughters, my aunts Audrey and Dorothy (known as Dolly), were the ideal age to help at the exhibitions.

Audrey had been training and working with children since she was aged 16, and as well as studying had gained experience with the Red Cross. Dolly had two small children by the end of the Second World War, and was still living with her parents.

So when the Ideal Home Exhibition advertised for women to work in their nursery looking after the children of parents walking around the exhibition, Audrey and Dolly both applied. Audrey still worked her day job, a nursery at Brook Green, and then from there walked to Olympia to start work in the evenings. She remembered being on her feet all day and night, working between 6.30am and 10pm each day for about a month, but she said that the pay was worth it.

I am assuming that one of the newspaper photographers was following the royal visitor around the exhibition, and offered a copy of this image to Dolly.

As a result of your article, I browsed the *Illustrated London News* in 1949 to find what the "Vision of the Future" was when my aunts were working there, and found that the first British stainless-steel pressure cooker was displayed! I remember my aunt telling me how when they first used one they all watched it come up to pressure, and then ran and hid when it whistled.

I was intrigued to find that Queen Mary had never missed an Ideal Home Exhibition since 1915, and would spend hours both reviewing exhibits and doing a lot of shopping. Imagine my surprise to find that on this particular day Queen Mary's visit was also filmed for the news that would be shown at the cinema – and Dolly is caught on camera!

Jane Evans, by email

Jane emailed us this photo of her aunt Dolly *(left of children and bent over)* working in the nursery at Olympia, 1949

Editor Replies Thank you for sharing this Jane. What a joy to see your aunt on camera. Readers can watch the film of Queen Mary's visit on British Pathé's website at britishpathe.com/asset/69912/.

Janette Fisher enjoyed Andrew Garfield's episode
A poignant episode, and really interesting. I found out recently that I have Jewish roots too so felt a kinship with him. For a Hollywood superstar he came across very humble – loved the episode and look forward to the rest of the series.

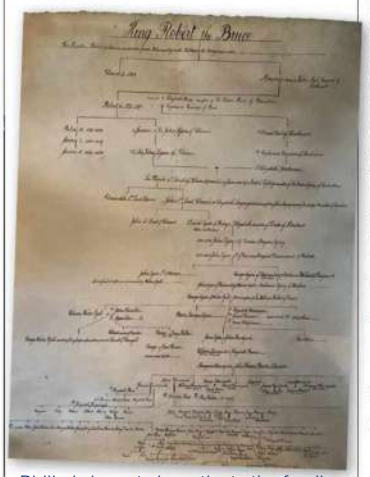
Scroll Scrutiny

I have been reading *WDYTYA? Magazine* for many years and even started to research my family tree many years ago, but with limited success. However, when I was a boy, my late father gave me a scroll on which there is a family tree, said to be his own *(pictured)*. There is a great deal of detail on it, and it appears to trace his family line back to Robert the Bruce. My father's name was Stanley and it appears on the second line from bottom right, showing that he was married to Maud (his first wife; my mother, his second wife, is not shown) and had a son Theodore Ross, who died young.

Unfortunately, I never paid much attention to this remarkable piece of work when I was young – now, to my regret – and I wish that I had asked whether there was any documentation to substantiate it. I have none.

Now, of course, my antecedents are no longer with us, and I can't ask. I have *some* material – my parents' marriage certificate for example, and even a birth certificate or two – but that is all. I'd welcome advice as to how I might authenticate the tree – or disprove it!

Philip Baxter, West Sussex



Philip is keen to investigate the family tree on this scroll his father gave him

Editor Replies Validating an existing family tree, whether online or on parchment, follows the same rules as building one (although it can help guide you). You can order any missing certificates online via the General Register Office's website at www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/. We've also got lots of tips to help you on our own site at whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com.

VE Day Memories

On last month's 'Welcome' page, you talk about recording people's memories of VE Day. I'm lucky in that my father Bob Atkinson (born in Govan, Glasgow, in 1914), from first going to ▶

sea in 1937, always kept a contemporaneous diary of events. This is what he wrote about VE Day 1945 when he was in Egypt.

"One day we happily received the news that the war in Europe had ended, and there were great celebrations. For our private celebration Fred and I flew to Cairo which happened to be my first ever flight, and I greatly enjoyed it. On this memorable day there was just the usual Egyptian blue sky, with some fleecy cumulus clouds drifting lazily by as six other passengers in addition to Fred and me waited for the plane…

"Climbing at first in jerks, and then more smoothly, we could see the roofs and minarets of Alexandria astern and below us…

"Coming out of the clouds we saw the Nile below us stretching away into the desert. Away ahead Cairo spread out with its tiny bridges across the river, and it gradually took on more shape… we touched down to a perfect landing…

"In twenty minutes more we alighted at the Hotel Continentale… A tall imposing *Dragoman* [guide] in flowing white robes and a turban stepped towards us, and in educated English asked if he could assist us. In about five steps we were in a taxi bound for the Pyramids at Giza, twelve miles away into the desert. Crossing the broad Nile, we sped along a road which our guide told us was made completely in forty-eight hours. This, at the instigation of Ibrahim Pasha, the then Khedive of Cairo. The purpose of this outstanding effort, by a whole army of natives, *fellaheen*, was expressly to facilitate the visit of Queen Victoria to the pyramids, which was previously made by asses and horse drawn carriages. It was a single strip of road and the complementary strip took three years to build…

"To alleviate the arduous walking and also to save time our Dragoman hired horses for us…

"To one side of the Temple and in a hollow lay the Sphinx… It is facing the East, without expression, it squats fairly with paws open and tail to one side, and the figure is massive and well preserved. The defacement of the nose is blamed on the Arabs. We saw sandbags under its chin, and brickwork over the tail erected against possible bombing – the body is so massive as to be almost impervious to damage."

Kenneth Atkinson, Cramlington

Kenneth's father Bob *(mounted left)* with friend Frederick Usher *(mounted right)*

@katebevan.com also shared her thoughts on Andrew Garfield's recent episode of *WDYTYA?*
Incredibly moving episode of #WhoDoYouThinkYouAre with Andrew Garfield and his Polish Jewish family.

Editor Replies **Thank you Kenneth for sharing this account and photograph. That is certainly an interesting way to celebrate the end of the war. Have other readers got unusual diary entries from that day?**

Nightingale Nurses

Your correspondent who expressed "nursing niggles" in the April issue of *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* needs to be sure of their facts.

It was the British Nurses' Association that was set up by Ethel Gordon Fenwick, and whose resources are at King's College. The British Nursing Association is quite another beast.

The Nightingale Fund also funded training at King's College Hospital, in particular for midwifery. The fund enabled our Nottingham Lying In Institution to send someone for midwifery training at King's in 1861.

The really helpful staff at The London Archives (**thelondonarchives.org**) will guide you through the archive of the Nightingale School of Nursing. The probationers' record of the school really provides the first detailed record of professional training for women in the UK.

David S Stewart OBE DL, Nottinghamshire History of Nursing Group (nottinghamnursinghistory.wordpress.com)

Editor Replies **I can see how the British Nurses' Association and the British Nursing Association could easily become confused. Thank you for the clarification.**

YOUR LETTER IN PRINT We reserve the right to edit any letters sent to the magazine. Messages posted to our Facebook wall and tweets sent to us may also appear in print. The choice of Star Letter is the editor's and the prize is subject to change.

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What's On

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PICK OF THE MONTH

Discover Victorian history with this conference

The Victorians

7 June
a **Wakefield Estate, Reading**
t 0118 950 9553
w **berksfhs.org/events/conference-the-victorians/?occurrence=2025-06-07**

The Royal Exchange in London, 1837

Berkshire Family History Society is celebrating its 50th birthday with this one-day conference about the Victorian era. The keynote speaker is historian and broadcaster Prof. Kate Williams, who discusses 'The Victorians: Superspeed History? From Jane Austen's Time to the Twentieth Century'. Six additional talks cover such topics as Victorian sources at The National Archives, the 1851 Great Exhibition, crime and punishment, the lives of factory workers, and the Victorian soldier. There will also be exhibition stalls, and a chance to pick the brains of the society's own experts. £55 for members of the society, otherwise £65.

IN PERSON

Country Lives

Until 21 September
a **Weston Gallery, University of Nottingham**
t 0115 846 7777
w **tinyurl.com/uni-nottingham-country-lives**
This exhibition reveals how the English countryside has been used and depicted over the past 200 years via items held by the University of Nottingham. Free.

A Very Respectable Company – Jane Austen And Her Southampton Circle

Until October
a **SeaCity Museum, Southampton**
t 02380 834536
w **seacitymuseum.co.uk/whats-on/jane-austen-exhibition/**
To mark the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth, this exhibition explores the women she knew while she lived in Southampton, who may have inspired her characters. Included with museum admission (£12.60 in advance, or £14 on the day).

Jamestown Brides

23 May
a **The Hold, Ipswich**
t 01473 296666
w **tinyurl.com/suff-arch-porter**
At this Suffolk Archives event Jennifer Potter will discuss her book *The Jamestown Brides*, about the "bartered wives" sent from England to the new British colony in America in 1621. £8.

Beaches, Fields, And Landing Grounds: Defending Northern Ireland During WW2

29 May
a **Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast**
t 028 9053 4800
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-proni-german**
Dr James O'Neill will reveal how Northern Ireland prepared for a German invasion in 1940. Free.

My Ancestor, The Arctic Explorer

7 June
a **Dartford Science and Technology College**
t 01322 527604
w **tinyurl.com/nwkfhs-arctic**
Clare Walker tells the story of her great great grandfather, who in 1875 took part in an expedition to discover the North Pole. Free to North West Kent Family History Society members, non-members asked to make a small donation.

IN PERSON & ONLINE

'I Hope Soon To Get Into A Hospital': Recruiting Jewish Refugees Into The British Nursing Profession

28 May
a **The Wiener Holocaust Library, London**
w **tinyurl.com/wiener-nursing**
In this talk Dr Jane Brooks will share the experiences of Jewish refugees who worked as nurses in Britain in the 1930s. Free.

Bletchley Park, Hitler And The BBC: The Story Of Rena Stewart

30 May
a **National Army Museum, London**
t 020 7730 0717
w **tinyurl.com/nam-rena-stew**
Victoria Walsh will discuss her book about Stewart, who was at Bletchley Park, translated Hitler's will and blazed a trail as a female journalist at the BBC. Free.

ONLINE

Pharos Tutors

2 June
w **pharostutors.com/courses**
Upcoming courses from Pharos Tutors include two starting on 2 June: 'Apprenticeship Records' with Richard Holt (lasts four weeks, non-assessed £63 or assessed £85) and 'Researching Your Welsh Ancestors' with Eilir Daniels (lasts five weeks, £70).

Researching Your Farming Ancestors And Relatives

3 June
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-nisbet**
Ken Nisbet reveals his expert tips if you have farmers or farmworkers in your family tree in this two-hour workshop from Lifelong Learning Dundee. £10, booking closes 30 May.

Introduction To Family History

4 June
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-nls-in**
Discover how to use the resources at the National Library of Scotland with this workshop. Free.

Researching In Northamptonshire

9 June
w **tinyurl.com/sog-northants**
In this online event from the Society of Genealogists, the SOG's Else Churchill, Angela Malin from Northamptonshire Family History Society and Sarah Bridges from Northamptonshire Archives Service will explain how to make the most of the resources available if your ancestors lived in Northamptonshire. Free.

BOOK AHEAD

Don't miss the latest Guild of One-Name Studies seminar

The Best Days Of Your Life

14 June
a **Bearley Village Hall**
t 0800 011 2182
w **one-name.org/seminar-events/**
In this seminar a series of speakers will discuss how the history of education overlaps with family history, including using school records to uncover stories from your forebears' schooldays, and how to track teachers in your family. £25, booking closes 1 June.

GETTY IMAGES

News

Rosemary Collins and **Magdalena Patynska** report on the latest data releases and genealogy news

Children celebrate the anniversary of the island's liberation

GUERNSEY ISLAND ARCHIVE

Over 1.7 m Guernsey records go online

More than 1.7 million records from the Channel Island of Guernsey have been added to family history website Findmypast (findmypast.co.uk).

During the past year over four centuries of records have been digitised as part of a project led by the Bailiwick of Guernsey Digitisation Partnership, which represents the Priaulx Library, Island Archives, the Deanery of Guernsey, La Société Guernesiaise and the Greffe (Guernsey's civil registrar).

The record sets include 547,000 parish baptism, marriage and burial records, from 1563–2022. They also include 174,000 civil birth, marriage and death records; 588,000 land records; 39,000 cemetery records; 15,000 records from the 1827 census of Guernsey; and 400,000 records from the occupation by Germany (1940–1945).

Important historical figures can be found in the records, which often offer a lot of details about their families. For example, the baptism records include that of Isaac Brock. Brock, born in 1769, joined the British Army and became a major general in the War of 1812, which was fought between Britain and the USA in Canada.

Before the 19th century, most official Guernsey records were kept in French. Hence his baptism record reads, "Isaac, Fils des Monsieur Jean Brock & de Dame Elizabeth De Lisle Sa Femme, né le 6es d'Octobre 1769 & batisé le 13es dudit mois, a eu pour Parrains Daniel De Lisle Ecr son Grand-père {qui étant indispose représenté par Monsr Pierre De Lisle Son Fils} & Ferdinand Brock Frère de l'Enfant: & pour Marraine, Dame Rebecca De Lisle Sa Grand mère." The English translation reads,"Isaac, Son of Monsieur Jean Brock & of Dame Elizabeth De Lisle His Wife, born on the 6th of October 1769 & baptised on the 13th of the said month, had as Godfathers Daniel De Lisle Esq his Grandfather {who being indisposed [was] represented by Monsieur Pierre De Lisle His Son} & Ferdinand Brock Brother of the Child: & for Godmother, Dame Rebecca De Lisle His Grandmother."

The records from the Second World War include occupation ID forms, with photographs and details of individual civilians; German-issued occupation orders, which inflicted restrictions such as curfews, and banning both public entertainment and playing the British national anthem; and 'Wish to Return' forms, compiled at the end of the war by evacuees from Guernsey who were living in Britain.

During the war, 2,300 residents of the Channel Island were deported to German internment camps. The ID forms include the records and photographs of the 16 Guernsey residents who were deported and died in the camps.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Shakespeare says goodbye to his family

Letter sheds new light on Shakespeare's marriage

A professor of English at the University of Bristol has produced research arguing that a fragmentary letter from the 17th century could show that William Shakespeare's wife Anne Hathaway lived with him in London, rather than separately in Stratford-upon-Avon. The letter fragments, found bound in a book, are addressed to "Good Mrs Shakspaire" and appeal to her to pay money owing to a young apprentice on her husband's behalf. Prof. Matthew Steggle's paper is online at **tinyurl.com/steggle-shake**.

Some of the material in the Darwin archive

Charles Darwin archive recognised by UNESCO

A major archive documenting the life and work of naturalist Charles Darwin has been added to UNESCO's International Memory of the World Register (**unesco.org.uk/our-sites/memory-of-the-world**). The archive spans more than 20,000 items across six UK institutions, including Cambridge University Library and the Natural History Museum. Highlights from the Darwin archive include his handwritten notebooks (with the original 'Tree of Life' sketch), experimental journals, personal letters, his will, and materials from his voyage aboard the HMS *Beagle*.

GETTY IMAGES / NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

British Army records from the 18th and 19th centuries go online

More than 1,064,000 records of financial 'prizes' awarded to soldiers in the British Army between 1720 and 1899 have been published online.

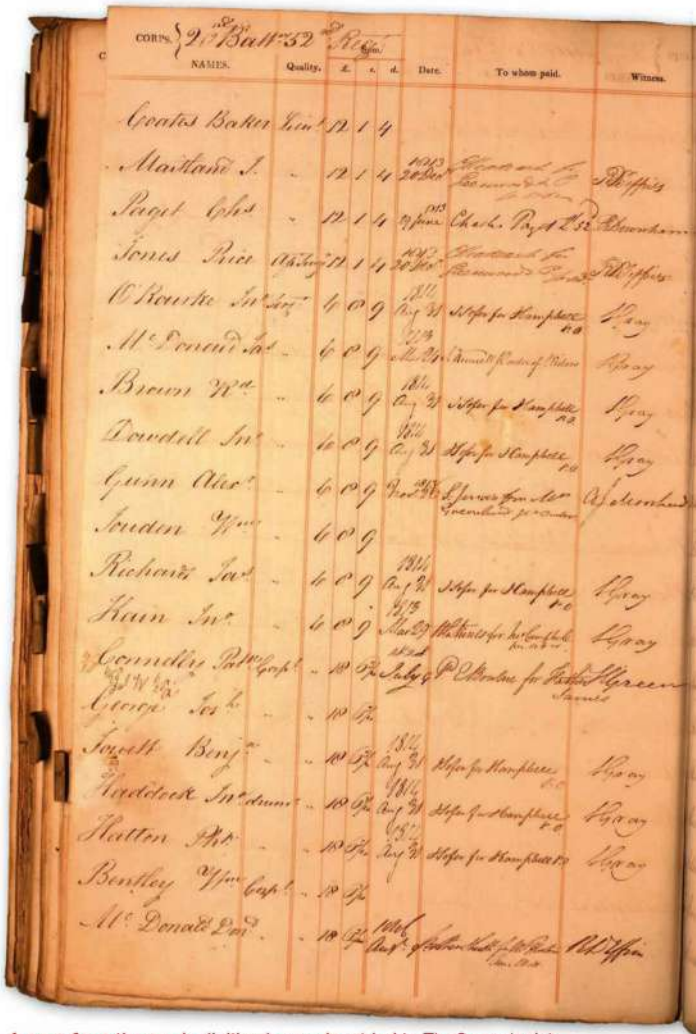
Family history website TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**) has released the collection 'Royal Hospital Chelsea: Prize Records', based on material in series WO 164 at The National Archives in Kew.

When British forces captured enemy property or territory, the spoils (or their monetary value) were pooled and allocated to the officers and men as 'prize' rewards. These records describe their allocation, whether to the soldiers themselves or a relative. The collection consists primarily of unclaimed shares.

The records related to such conflicts as the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783), the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) and the Peninsular War (1807–1814).

Many registers remained open for decades after the original payments, listing relations who claimed the prizes long after the particular campaign ended.

The collection also contains such documents as warrants and quarterly accounts.



A page from the newly digitised records added to TheGenealogist

CAN YOU HELP?

Members of the public are invited to contribute to a new project investigating the history of a 19th-century area of Edinburgh. *A Plan of the Lands of Newington and Belleville*, an 1826 map of seven streets in the West Blacket area, has been published on the National Library of Scotland's maps website, superimposed on modern-day maps and aerial photographs (**maps.nls.uk/projects/newington**). The blue and green annotation boxes contain information about the inhabitants of the buildings in 1826, the history of the area, and how it has changed over time. Further contributions are welcome as part of plans to commemorate the bicentenary of the map in 1826. If you have any information to add to the annotations, please get in touch by emailing Ron Hill on *r.g.hill@talk21.com*.

The 1826 map of Edinburgh's West Blacket area

One of the documents Union soldiers held at Castle Pinckney, Charleston, in 1861

Thousands of stolen archive documents returned to Scotland

The National Records of Scotland (NRS; nrscotland.gov.uk) has returned 3,100 historic documents stolen between 1949 and 1980 from its archives and other UK institutions.

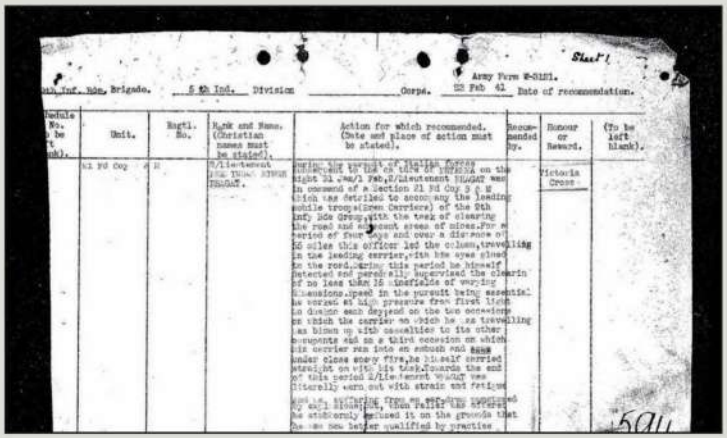
The items – mostly family, estate and business correspondence – are believed to have been taken by Prof. David Macmillan, who worked at the Scottish Record Office (the NRS's former name) in 1949–1950 and taught history at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada.

About 2,000 items belong to the NRS, while others are owned by organisations including The National Archives at Kew and the National Library of Scotland.

The full scale of the thefts was uncovered in 2012. The subsequent investigation by NRS archivists and Trent University exposed some 2,900 items gifted to the university after Macmillan died in 1987.

The documents were successfully returned to Scotland in 2015, and have now been returned to their original collections.

Ancestry adds lists of military honours



You can find details of your ancestor's military service in award recommendations

Family history website Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) has added a collection of 189,496 records of military honours and awards. They date from 1935–1943 and include applications of recommendations, lists of award recipients, and announcements of recipients in the *London Gazette*. The records are for personnel in the British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Air Force, and for awards exchanged between British and Allied forces. The indexes of the records are available on Ancestry, and images of the documents are on Forces War Records (**uk.forceswarrecords.com**), Ancestry's military records website.

36
The number of Australian Indigenous people whose remains are held by the Natural History Museum in London and will be returned to their communities (**tinyurl.com/bbc-nhm**)

575,174
The number of Suffolk parish records added to **findmypast.co.uk**

85 years
The amount of time it has taken childhood sweethearts to be reunited, thanks to efforts to trace the children depicted in a Scottish school photograph taken in 1936 (**tinyurl.com/bbc-1936-sweet**)

2,048,990
The number of Irish Catholic parish records added to **familysearch.org**

1.9 m
The number of same-day viewers of Andrew Garfield's episode

4,830,692
The total number of records in the collection 'Canada, Passenger Lists, 1865–1922' newly added to **myheritage.com**

The historic Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings during its restoration by Historic England

English Heritage requests return of missing bell

English Heritage has launched an appeal to locate a bell from a historic site in Shropshire.

Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings first opened as a flax mill in 1797. The site became a maltings in 1897, was an army training unit and barracks during the Second World War, and closed in 1987. After being restored by Historic England it has now opened as English Heritage's first new paid-for site in 21 years (**english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/shrewsbury-flaxmill-maltings/**).

The factory's bell, installed when it first opened, would ring out to mark the start and finish of each working day. It is believed to be about 24 inches high with "1797" cast upon it. The bell has not been seen since the factory closed.

Matt Thompson, curatorial director of English Heritage, said, "Whilst it is possible that the bell could have been melted down, it is more likely that someone took it as a souvenir of this imposing, historic building which – at the time – looked close to ruin."

Anyone who has a lead on the bell can get in touch by emailing *press@english-heritage.org.uk*.

NATIONAL RECORDS OF SCOTLAND | HISTORIC ENGLAND

Parish Particulars

Alan Crosby explains why we have Thomas Cromwell to thank for parish registration

What are parish registers? I'm sure we all know the answer, or at least we think we do; I am surprised how often I read that registers recorded births, marriages and deaths, rather than baptisms and burials. We are so used to them, that it probably doesn't even occur to us how remarkable it all is – that parish registration was introduced almost 500 years ago, and that in quite a few parishes it has been continuous for that entire period. So what was the original intention, and what was it about the idea that attracted the attention of Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's chief minister and the man who, more than any other, was responsible for its introduction?

The idea of keeping a register of, in particular, all baptisms was not entirely new. A significant earlier scheme was that introduced in the 1470s in the Spanish archdiocese of Toledo. This gives a clue to the rationale behind the idea, for this area was a focus of the notorious Spanish Inquisition, in which the identification and persecution of Jews was a central element. In the case of uncertainty, the presence of an official registration of an individual's baptism into the Catholic Church could be of paramount importance.

These documents are one of the mainstays of British family history

We simply don't know Cromwell's thinking on these subjects, although some of his other reforms during the 1530s confirm the image of a man dedicated to paperwork, regulations and the orderly procedures of efficient government. In England there was no Spanish Inquisition, but the timing of the new policy cannot be coincidental. In 1534, England formally broke with Rome, and the Church of England was established with the king at its head. Was the new registration system a way of ascertaining who, and which families, were loyal to the Crown, having been baptised, married or buried with the rites of the Church of England?

The new system was introduced in 1538, and even though two years later Cromwell, its architect, was beheaded, it survived and flourished. Today these documents have become one of the mainstays of British family history, and are the most heavily used archival sources in this country… so heavily used, of course, that now it is quite rare to be able to see an original. As far back as the 18th century the unique historical importance of parish registers had started to be recognised. In the second half of the 19th century various organisations embarked on the massive task of transcribing and publishing them, and in the early 20th century they were the subject of some of the earliest new information-preservation technologies such as microfilming.

We can only speculate about what people at the time thought about the new procedure. For the clergy, caught up in a whirlwind of religious change, it was yet another burden, one more nuisance, one more thing preventing them from having a quiet life. For the church authorities, it was another layer of the fast-increasing bureaucracy, additional paperwork that each diocesan was supposed to monitor. At this stage the church officials only had to see that the system was working well, but it quickly became clear that lazy or disaffected parish clergy did a poor job of keeping the register, or might even fail completely. Fifty years later the synod of the Church of England was moving towards a much more interventionist supervision and scrutiny of register-keeping and standards.

It is doubtful if many 'ordinary people' even knew of the existence of parish registers. Only with the introduction of the printed marriage registers in the 1750s did most have direct contact with them.

But if our ancestors did know that their baptism and marriage, and in due course their burial, were being recorded in this way, I think that their immediate reaction would have been highly cynical. "If the Government wants to know about us," they might have said, over foaming tankards at the alehouse, "that means one of two things. They want us to do something we don't want to do, or they want to tax us. Maybe both!"

ALAN CROSBY lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION WWW.SUEGENT.COM

GET MORE FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has become an unmissable resource for family historians says genealogist **Kelly Cornwell**, who shares her expert advice for making the most of different platforms

The World Wide Web brought the internet into the public domain in 1993, and since then it has evolved beyond anything we could have imagined. We can buy clothes, food and all manner of items online, and have them delivered directly to our door in a matter of hours.

The web is also a place for entertainment and education, and – above all else – a way for us to interact. The first official social media network, Six Degrees, launched in 1997 and survived until 2000. Online forums for specific subjects had been used for a number of years, but Six Degrees (based on the 'six degrees of separation') aimed to be a personal place, where a user could create a profile and connect with friends and family. At its peak, the website had more than three million members, an unprecedented figure. In comparison, a recent estimate suggests that today there are more than five billion users of social media, and some platforms have billions of users on their own.

The ever-changing world of social media can sometimes be a little daunting. It seems that in the blink of an eye another platform pops up from nowhere and existing platforms are upgrading algorithms, introducing new tools or changing layouts; but you should not allow this to put you off. Social media is here to stay, and its rapidly increasing presence in our daily lives needn't be a nuisance. Think about the ways you already engage on social media. You might stay in touch with family on Facebook (**facebook.com**), share photos of your pets or holidays on Instagram (**instagram.com**), or watch videos on YouTube (**youtube.com**). These platforms can all be harnessed and used for your family history research too.

Our ancestors loved to socialise in pubs, but social media can help you to grow your tree, as well as make friends and have fun

Connecting

A big advantage of interacting with other social media users is the joy of discussing your

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research with fellow family historians. Researching can often be a solitary activity; if your immediate circle of friends and family do not understand the delight to be found in exploring churchwardens' accounts, cause papers or manorial-court baron rolls, then it is an absolute thrill to be able to chat about these topics with other researchers who appreciate our obsession with historical documents.

Another benefit of networking with fellow family historians is that when you start sharing your interest about a particular place, surname or occupation, other researchers will point you in the direction of articles, blogs, websites and records that you might not have known about.

Learning

Interacting with other social media users allows us to learn. We can keep up to date with what is happening in the family history industry, such as upcoming events, an interesting talk or course about a topic related to our ancestors, or discover the release of newly digitised collections accessible online. Since the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, many events have become hybrid, offering attendees the opportunity to join in person or virtually. The largest annual conference in the family history calendar – FamilySearch's RootsTech (**rootstech.org**) – does just that. In addition to the live talks, you can view hundreds of recorded sessions online, which is a rich resource for your research.

Similarly, the Society of Genealogists' (**sog.org.uk**) annual virtual event All About That Place, produced in partnership with the Society for One-Place Studies (**one-place-studies.org**), includes a series of presentations from family and local historians. Many are still available to view via SOG's YouTube channel: **youtube.com/@SocietyofGenealogists/videos.**

Social media's increasing presence in our daily lives needn't be a nuisance

Sharing

Using social media to share your research is a great way of documenting your findings. The prospect of collating all your work and bringing it together can feel a little overwhelming. Posting on social media, particularly via blogs, allows you to create a chapter of your story one step at a time. These little chunks will soon come together to build a larger body of work, with seemingly very little effort. Facebook Groups, whether public or private, are a great space to interact with people interested in your subject. Simply search for the town or village ▶

Bluesky bsky.app / x.com

ESTIMATED USERS Over 33 million **ESTIMATED MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS** Over 586 million

Both 'micro-blogging' sites are text-based, although your posts can contain up to four images. There is a tighter character limit than the likes of Facebook: 280 for X (unless you pay to upgrade your account) and 300 for Bluesky. Both platforms are used by a wide age demographic, and they tend to post less than on TikTok but more than on Facebook, mostly due to the succinct content. Bluesky/X is second-best for connecting, learning and sharing.

3 ACCOUNTS TO FOLLOW

@GenealogyJude (Both)
Follow individual researchers/family historians such as Judith Batchelor, who shares posts containing wonderful stories and useful advice.

@OnePlaceStudies (Bluesky)
The Society for One-Place Studies shares articles about the places your forebears may have lived, and runs virtual events to participate in online.

@RWLDproject (Both)
History projects such as the long-running Railway Work, Life & Death Project can shed valuable light on an aspect of your ancestor's life.

Facebook facebook.com

ESTIMATED MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS Over 3 billion

Posts are mostly text-based, with some pictures and occasionally video 'reels'. There is a high character limit (more than 63,000 per post) and a wide age demographic, but fewer younger users. The 'Groups' facility is excellent, and they can be public or private. However, the platform is slower-paced, so new accounts are not likely to reach high levels of engagement quickly. Facebook is best for connecting, sharing and advertising to a wide demographic.

3 ACCOUNTS TO FOLLOW

@AFewForgottenWomen
You can follow pages for family history projects on Facebook, including A Few Forgotten Women sharing stories from their research.

@AGTSomerset
Company archives are great for finding records of ancestors' employers. The Alfred Gillett Trust holds the collections of Somerset shoemaker Clarks.

@PharosTutors
Follow educational companies such as Pharos Tutors for industry news as well as details of courses they're running on family history subjects.

your ancestors once lived in, followed by the word 'history', and see what you can find. The same search can be done for an occupation, or even a surname.

Facebook Groups centred on family history are full of posts from people sharing recent discoveries, seeking advice on where best to find a particular piece of information, or asking for help with a tricky line of palaeography. *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*, for example, has its own private Group, in addition to its Facebook page, with almost 12,000 members sharing advice and answering questions (**facebook.com/groups/wdytyareadergroup/**).

If there isn't a Group dedicated to your subject, you could create one yourself. You can personalise it by uploading a photo and adding a description. You can also allocate roles to members (such as making them admins to help you manage the Group), and add rules for members to abide by.

Social media is popular with people of all ages, but TikTok in particular is geared towards younger users

Advertising

Sharing your research or event on social media is an excellent way of raising awareness; and if you are looking for assistance, it is the perfect tool for attracting people to your project. Your posts may catch the attention of distant cousins, who might have information or photographs they are willing to share; or perhaps someone who has researched the same subject, and would like to collaborate. Also if you are a professional genealogist, social media is an easy and inexpensive way to advertise your services.

Joining Events

There are family history communities on most social media platforms, who, at certain times each week, come together to engage about family and local history. For example, Tuesday at 7pm UK time is #AncestryHour on Bluesky (**bsky.app**). If you follow this hashtag you will find people from all over the world discussing anything and everything genealogy-related. Every second and fourth Friday a USA-based genealogy community called #GenChat post questions on Bluesky relating to family history. The interaction between participants is a little slower, because it starts at 10pm Eastern Standard Time – the early hours of the morning in the UK. On Wednesdays, across various platforms, you can follow #OnePlaceWednesday to chat about one-place studies all day long. #GenHour is on Thursdays at 8pm UK Time, also across a few different sites.

Comparing The Platforms

There are numerous platforms out there, and it is up to you to decide which ones you want to try. They each have their own policies when it comes to how they handle your data, privacy, sensitive/explicit material, even the algorithms used to show particular posts in your newsfeed. So when you set up an account, check the settings that will determine exactly what you are sharing with the world.

Like all of the other platforms

TikTok tiktok.com

ESTIMATED MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS Over 1.6 billion

TikTok is almost entirely visual – shared content is mostly short videos, but can be a single image or slideshow of images, and minimal text is used. Users have a much younger demographic than the likes of Facebook. Adding a 'trending' sound, challenge or filter can help a post gain traction quickly. The site is very fast-paced – weekly (if not daily) content is required to grow/keep a strong audience. TikTok is the best platform for reaching younger people.

3 ACCOUNTS TO FOLLOW

@ESFHistory
Follow groups like the Essex Society for Family History that shares short videos containing facts from documents found within Essex Record Office.

@familytreegirl
Stacey posts fun, entertaining videos on her TikTok account that include excellent research tips together with stories from her family history.

@Findmypast
The company makes light-hearted videos highlighting its record collections, particularly new releases. You should follow **@ancestry** too.

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featured in this article, Facebook is used by a variety of people with an interest in family history. In addition to individuals and family history societies, there are Groups and pages dedicated to the history of businesses, schools, churches, hospitals, mines, railways and military divisions, to name but a few. Pages are generally for professionals and organisations looking to promote themselves, whereas Groups enable like-minded people to connect. Note that a post in a private Group does not have a 'Share' button at the bottom, because the content is solely for the members.

Another hugely popular social media platform is the 'micro-blogging' site X (**x.com**), formerly known as Twitter, where posts are predominantly text-based with a tighter character limit than the likes of Facebook. Changes in the management of the site since it was acquired by Elon Musk in 2022 have seen many users leave and join rival platforms such as Mastodon (**mastodon.social**), Threads (**threads.net**) and Bluesky. While X is still popular among family historians, the genealogy community on Bluesky is becoming stronger and stronger, and *WDYTYA? Magazine* has accounts on both.

In contrast with X, TikTok (**tiktok.com**) is entirely visual as users create and share short videos. The platform relies heavily on hashtags, and is aimed at a younger audience. In order to grab attention, most posts have music added to them, particularly something catchy or trending. Transient fads cause certain hashtags, filters or sounds to have huge numbers of likes and shares, allowing posts to go viral – although what is hot one minute will be old news the next on this fast-paced platform.

YouTube videos tend to be longer, and while there is an option to add text, there is much less dialogue between an account and its followers than on other platforms. YouTube is, however, a fantastic source of ideas and advice to direct your research. There are videos from individuals, genealogy giants such as Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), as well as hundreds of smaller organisations sharing expertise.

There are many more social media platforms out there, but these examples give you a good idea of how they can be used to your advantage. Whichever platforms you pick, and however you choose to interact, social media is invaluable for family history research, and you will benefit enormously by being a part of this digital world.

YouTube is a fantastic source of ideas and advice to direct your research

YouTube youtube.com

ESTIMATED MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS Over 2.5 billion

YouTube is all about video content – varying in length, but generally longer than those on TikTok. You can add a text post to accompany the video, but viewers are mostly here to watch rather than read. The demographic has a wide age range, and the platform is relatively slow-paced – and while there is a comments feature, engagement is much less than elsewhere. It's the best platform for learning, since instructional talks and lectures are widely available.

3 ACCOUNTS TO FOLLOW

@FamilySearch
Here you can watch talks from past RootsTech events covering a vast array of topics, including genetic genealogy.

@SocietyofGenealogists
You can watch videos about the society's collections, as well as talks from the annual All About That Place virtual event.

@TheNationalArchivesUK
Archives such as TNA share videos about their holdings, with advice about using their collections to grow your tree.

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Most users connect with social media platforms using free apps for tablets and smartphones

KELLY CORNWELL is a family history tutor, genealogist and speaker. Find out more at **whoamiresearch.com**

Make sure that you follow *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* on Bluesky, Facebook and X for research advice and all the latest family history news, including special offers and record releases.

FINDING THE FORGOTTEN

Ian Castle reveals how he's identified almost 1,300 lost victims of Germany's First World War air raids

At 11pm on Monday 31 May 1915, those Londoners who were not already in bed would soon be so. As the hubbub of the city died down, others who had been enjoying the capital's entertainments were making their way home. Although the First World War had raged for 10 months, Londoners had yet to experience the horrors of the conflict that had brought carnage to Europe. As the day drew to a close, however, an ominous droning sound could be heard in the sky. A German airship – a Zeppelin – flying almost two miles high approached North London, and prepared to bomb the city from the air for the very first time in its history. In that moment a war that just a few minutes earlier had seemed so far away arrived on Londoners' doorsteps.

This period has long fascinated me, luring me down a long trail of discovery. Meticulous records kept by the organisations with a role to play in these first ever air raids – now preserved at The National Archives at Kew (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**) in the collection Air Ministry: Air Historical Branch: Papers (Series I), reference AIR 1 – reveal in detail the places where bombs dropped, in addition to the damage they inflicted.

However, one important thing is missing: the names of the victims who were killed. The information was never compiled by the authorities at the time, meaning

Houses wrecked in Edridge Road, East Croydon, after a Zeppelin raid on the night of 13/14 October 1915

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Uncovering The 'Young Fellow'

Ian reveals how he identified one victim of the air raids

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, reporting on a raid over the "south-eastern outskirts of London" on 25 September 1917, described how, "One of the bombs fell and buried itself in a narrow road, and several small dwelling-houses were badly damaged… a young man and a man of sixty-eight years of age were killed."

An eyewitness took up the story. "We had just shut the front door when the crash came… the door blew in right on top of me [and] we saw a young fellow who lived a few doors away lying dead on the pavement."

So who was this "young fellow"? The Metropolitan Police report revealed that there was only one road in South-East London where two men were killed – Marcia Road, Bermondsey. An updated report added that one of the victims was a soldier. Going to the 'Find War Dead' section of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's website (**www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/**), I supplied the limited information I knew: 'Served with (country)' (UK), 'Served in' (Army), 'War' (First World War), 'Country (commemorated in)' (UK) and 'Date of Death' (25/09/1917). The search revealed 18 names, and one – Andrew Gebbett, Royal Field Artillery – was buried in Nunhead Cemetery in South-East London.

Clicking 'More details' revealed two links to 'Grave registration' documents. One included a handwritten addendum stating that Gebbett, aged 27, died in an air raid on 25 September 1917, and he lived at 56 Marcia Road (incorrectly spelled "Mercia"). I had identified the "young fellow".

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE

THE RAID: 15 DEAD, 70 INJURED.

ENEMY AIRMEN'S DASH FOR LONDON.

A NOISY NIGHT.

BERLIN'S AMAZING CLAIMS.

GERMAN EFFORTS IN THE WEST.

HOT RECEPTION FOR RAIDERS.

SCENES IN THE STREETS.

Ian followed up the report of an air raid in a London newspaper, available digitally online

that the lives of the 1,414 people who died are officially forgotten.

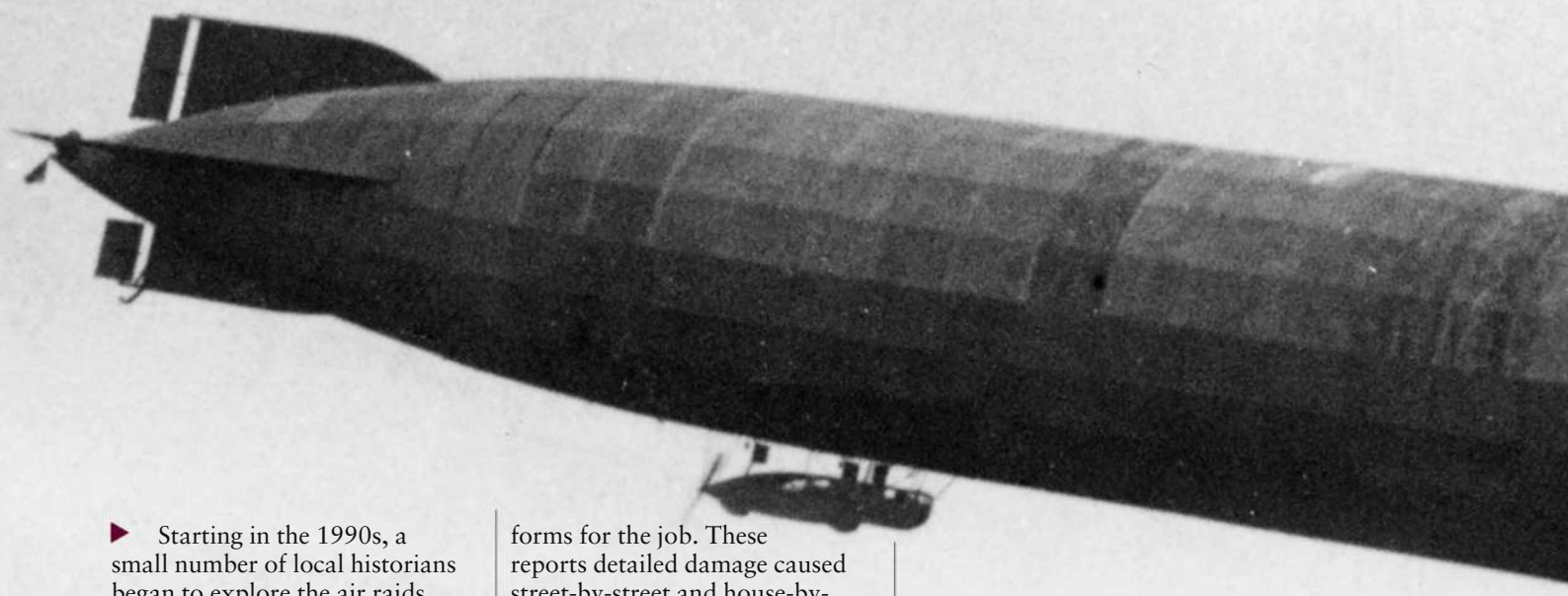
Yet each death was a devastating tragedy for their loved ones. During that first London Zeppelin raid in May 1915, bombs in Stoke Newington, Hackney, killed a child aged three and her 11-year-old sister when flames gutted the family home. Half a mile away, in Dalston, a married couple, unable to escape the flames of their burning house, died in each other's arms. And in a street in Whitechapel, East London, an explosion killed a 16-year-old girl as well as an eight-year-old boy.

When I embarked on researching and writing my non-fiction trilogy *Forgotten Blitz*, my aim was to deliver the most detailed account possible of the German air raids, and within that to record the names of those who had lost their lives. Up until that first London raid it had proved a simple enough task, because newspapers reported fully on the raids giving extraordinarily detailed accounts including identifying the victims.

Newspaper Censorship

However, within three hours of those bombs falling in London, the Government's Press Bureau issued D (Defence) Notice 217 to restrict reporting, informing newspaper editors that they could no longer publish details of air raids other than the official statements provided by the Government. Initially this was strictly adhered to, although as the war progressed editors began to give more information again, but only occasionally the names of victims and rarely the place, instead giving only vague geographic markers such as "an East Coast town", "a Northern town" or "the Midlands".

This censorship strangled an invaluable source of information for later historians. Yet there was a valid reason for doing so. In April 1915 one Zeppelin commander only discovered where his bombs had fallen when he read an article in a German newspaper that had picked up the story from a report published in the neutral Netherlands, which itself had been sourced from a British newspaper! ▶



Starting in the 1990s, a small number of local historians began to explore the air raids in their own towns – and where this occurred, their work has been a great assistance. However, these places were generally only bombed once, with low casualties resulting. But this exercise has never previously been attempted in London, which accounted for 670 (47 per cent) of all air-raid deaths inflicted by both airship and bomber aeroplane. And so, some 110 years later, I had to devise methods of my own to track down the forgotten victims in London and other places across Britain not researched by local historians.

Police Reports

The details of exactly where the bombs fell can be found in the meticulous reports complied by the police; they were even supplied with specially designed forms for the job. These reports detailed damage caused street-by-street and house-by-house, and give the number of victims killed and injured, listed by adult gender or as children ("M", "W" or "C") . But only rarely do they give victims' names. In the capital the records of the London Fire Brigade (transcribed on Findmypast as 'London Fire Brigade Reports 1915–1918' at **bit.ly/fmp-london-fire-ww1**) offer an additional eye on raids, adding more detail about the structural damage and, at times, particularly in the earlier raids, including the names of victims.

Names can also be found by trawling through the reporting of air raids in publications digitised by the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**) where names sometimes appear in the reported parts of coroners' inquests, but generally the place where the inquest took place does not. Newspaper journalists visited the devastated communities where bombs had fallen; there they reported what they saw and interviewed eyewitnesses, but could not mention where they had been.

Journalists visited the devastated communities where bombs had fallen

One source that is of great help when tracking down military victims of air raids is the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's website (**cwgc.org**). By searching on known dates of raids for deaths in the UK in the 'Find War Dead' section at **www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/**, you may find attached documents mentioning that they were "Killed in an air raid".

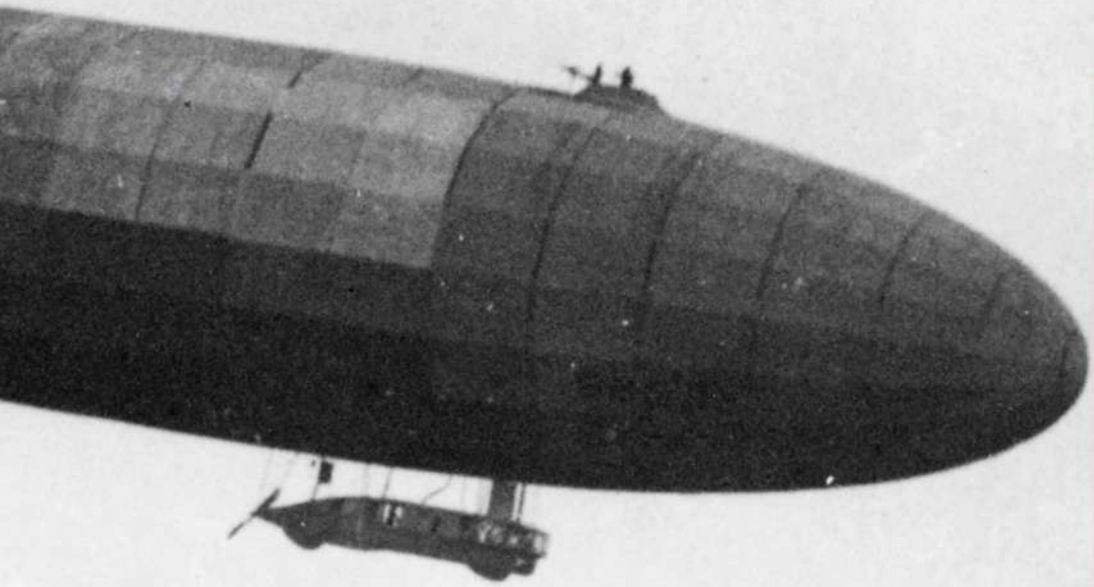
Assembling The Jigsaw

The task I faced was to take these resources and marry them together where possible. If a newspaper article mentioned casualties in a general location, I could attempt to close in using police reports by checking addresses where people were killed or injured. Now narrowed down, I looked for any additional comments regarding damage to the property then searched for similar evidence in newspaper reports. Additionally, publicly reported findings from inquests may describe the place and circumstances of a victim's death, which can also help place them at an address that was listed in the police reports.

There is also one other source that I found particularly useful

Gotha heavy bombers were used in the air raids as well as Zeppelins

GETTY IMAGES



Germany used Zeppelins, similar to this one, to bomb Britain during the First World War

when looking at raids where a significant number of people were killed. If a few names have already been identified from the reporting of coroners' inquests in newspapers, a search of the General Register Office's (GRO's) death index on FreeBMD may reveal others (**freebmd.org.uk/cgi/search.pl**). For instance, in London on the night of 28/29 January 1918, a huge bomb exploded at Odhams Printing Works in Long Acre, Covent Garden, where the large basement area served as an official public air-raid shelter. The devastating blast claimed the lives of 38 people, the largest death toll in the capital from a single bomb throughout the war.

A couple of days later the *Daily News*, reporting on that "London" bomb, gave names or partial names for 11 of the victims. Those names, all reported in the St Martin Registration District, were located across six consecutive pages of the GRO's death index (Volume 1a, 627–632). Each of the pages lists five names. Since the pages are consecutive, it occurred to me that the names may have been recorded at the same time. On page 627 there were two names from the article, two more on page 628, one on 629, two on 630, two on 631 and one on 632; it raised the possibility that the other names on the same pages could also be victims of the bomb.

Leap Of Faith

I now needed to take a leap of faith and test my theory. I ordered a copy of a death certificate of a name from each of the pages where I already had confirmed victims via the GRO's site at **www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/**. When the certificates arrived, each contained the same phrase in the "Cause of Death" section: "Bomb dropped from an enemy aircraft." I could add six more confirmed names to my growing list. I then repeated the process, each time identifying more victims. But there are more still to be uncovered by this cost-heavy process – and sometimes I draw a blank, and my investment proves to be wasted.

I have now completed the *Forgotten Blitz* trilogy. Local histories, police and fire-brigade reports, newspaper accounts, coroners' reports, the CWGC's site and the GRO's death index have all been consulted to help identify and list 1,285 (91 per cent) of the 1,414 who lost their lives during the 102 air raids of the First World War. Whereas once these victims were shrouded in darkness, now their sacrifice can at last be recognised and brought back into the light.

IAN CASTLE is an author and historian. Visit **iancastlezeppelin.co.uk** for details of every air raid on Britain during the First World War

GETTY IMAGES

Resources

Take your research further

ARCHIVE

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
a **Kew, Richmond TW9 4DU**
w **nationalarchives.gov.uk**
The Air Ministry: Air Historical Branch: Papers (Series I), reference AIR 1 at TNA, include documents relating to all air raids on Britain during the First World War, such as police reports.

BOOK

Gotha Terror: The Forgotten Blitz 1917–1918
Ian Castle
Frontline, 2024
Together with Ian's previous books *Zeppelin Onslaught: The Forgotten Blitz 1914–1915* (Frontline, 2018) and *Zeppelin Inferno: The Forgotten Blitz 1916* (Frontline, 2022), this series offers a unique insight into every raid, utilising first-hand accounts, many previously unpublished. Each title has a national list of those killed.

WEBSITES

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
This is an invaluable source for contemporary reporting.

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION
w **www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/**
You can track down the air raids' military victims via this database.

FREEBMD
w **freebmd.org.uk**
The General Register Office's death index is available here.

An Unfinished Quest

Can you help Ian identify the remaining victims?

My research has so far revealed the names of 1,285 victims of the German air raids on Britain during the First World War, and I would love to be able to identify as many of the other 129 as possible. If you have a family story about a relative who may have been killed in an air raid but are not certain if it is true, I may know something of the circumstances of their death, or they could even be one of the 129. So please get in touch via my website.

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

'Matilda Had To Give Her Children Up'

Rob Earnden has untangled a complex story of seduction and separation that shaped the lives of four siblings, as **Claire Vaughan** explains

A classified advert published in the 15 August 1912 issue of weekly Australian news magazine *The Bulletin* reads, "Mrs C Skingley of No 1 Victoria Road, Oxney Green, Writtle near Chelmsford, England, wants to hear from her brother Ivy Earnden, who was at Uanda Station, Australia, some years ago."

It's a crucial bit of the puzzle Rob Earnden patiently pieced together as he searched for the truth about his Earnden family. There's no way of knowing if Mrs Skingley's advert helped her trace her brother, but 120 years later, it allowed Rob, one of their relatives, to reunite the siblings – in family lore at least.

Rob, who lives in Nottingham, began wondering about his origins in 2023, when his son was a year old. "I didn't have many pictures of myself at his age. I offered to scan and organise my mum's collection, and found photographs of ancestors I'd never met." He became obsessed. "I wanted to put names to faces, stories to names, and solve the mysteries that had been lost to time."

I wanted to put names to faces, and solve the mysteries that had been lost to time

Surname Quest

Nobody in Rob's family knew much about the Earnden side, but he remembers, "Our surname is so rare, I figured that tracing its origins *had* to be possible.

"My grandad, Colin, told me his grandfather was called Charles William Earnden, and had been a chauffeur for the Bamford family on the Wirral in north-west England. His life was a mystery – all Grandad knew was that he died in 1939 of a heart attack behind the wheel of the Bamfords' car." Charles was a very private man. Martha, his wife, had told Colin's cousin that "he and his brother Ivan had run away from a family they were sent to live with, leaving behind a baby sister 'Polly', and Ivan had apparently been sent to Australia."

Rob knew from census entries that Charles had been born in Barking, and the 1903 certificate from his marriage to Martha identified his father as Charles Earnden (deceased), railway clerk. "The surname 'Earnden' was unique, and this was the earliest instance I could find of it. Before 1903, Charles was a ghost."

Rob looked for Charles' brother in the Australian archives. "Ivan had also miraculously appeared in 1903, but in Queensland, Australia. He died in 1923, his past equally elusive." Rob ordered Ivan's marriage and death certificates, hoping these Australian records, which included mothers' names, might hold a clue to his origins.

They revealed that Ivan was born in London, and his mother's name was Matilda Tilt. A search on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) turned up railway-employment records for Ivan giving his date of birth: 26 August 1881. Rob hit the birth indexes trying every possible spelling of Earnden, with no luck until the entries for "Hearnden". There was no Ivan, but a "Moore Hearnden" born in Hackney, East London, caught his eye.

What's In A Name?

On FreeBMD (**freebmd.org.uk**), this record was transcribed "Yvone" – could it be Ivan? The certificate showed that Yvone was born on 26 August 1881 to Sarah Matilda Hearnden at 95 Lauriston Road. The 1881 census entry showed the residents as Charles Kirkpatrick, age 33, railway clerk, born Scotland; wife Matilda, 24; and Charles William, son, aged two and born in Barking. Was this Charles his great great grandfather?

"I scrambled back to search the General Register Office's website (**www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content**), and there he was: Charles William Kirkpatrick, born Romford, 1878." The birth certificate showed Charles Kirkpatrick and Matilda Hearnden (unmarried) as the parents.

But where did the name Tilt fit in, and who was Charles Kirkpatrick?

Rob couldn't find a man of this name in prior censuses not already accounted for, so persuaded his grandad and grandad's cousins to take DNA tests with surprising results.

"I found some strong matches at half-second-cousin distance," Rob says. "Unpicking a couple, the same name kept appearing – Charles William Sharpe Kirkpatrick. But he was with another family in the 1881 census. Not only that, he was the son of Sir Charles Sharpe Kirkpatrick, 6th Baronet of Closeburn."

Sceptical, Rob used the ThruLines tool on Ancestry, which reveals how you might be related to your DNA matches; compared Charles' signature on various documents; and ▶

UNP/RICHARD GRANGE

Here Rob holds a Bible that was given to Charles Earnden in 1894

took a Y-37 (paternal line) DNA test. All of the evidence seemed to confirm that he was a direct descendant of the Closeburn Kirkpatricks.

When Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) released some school records for Kent, Rob had a new hit. "The record was for 'Hearnden, Ivan' in Tunbridge Wells in 1890. What was he doing there? There was no sign of Charles."

The record gave a home address and Ivan's last school – "Dr Barnardo's". "I took to Google. Barnardo's was a group of children's homes, and when I checked the 1891 census entry I found Ivan recorded as John *Hearden*, nine years old, birthplace not known."

Barnardo's Bombshell

Rob contacted Barnardo's Making Connections research service to inquire about Ivan (**barnardos.org.uk/get-support/services/making-connections-family-history-service**). They confirmed that they had his records – and Charles' too. "Four months later, I received a packet in the post. It almost brought me to tears."

In it was a photograph and description of each brother from when the charity took them in. Ivone (Ivan) was seven, three feet seven inches tall, had brown hair and a fair complexion, with eczema. Charles was described as 10 years old, four feet tall, with brown hair, a ruddy complexion – and vermin bites.

The admission record revealed that their mother Matilda applied for Barnardo's to take the boys. A barmaid in a pub, she had been seduced by a married customer, Charles Kirkpatrick. He supported her for eight years, but then deserted her, so she turned to prostitution to feed herself and her children. It's clear that Matilda was fond of the boys, but at the foot of the document, it read, "Charles and Ivone were admitted for Canada and the usual agreement has been signed for each boy by the mother." There was no mention of Polly.

Confirming Rob's findings, the document also noted,

Barnardo's photos of Charles *(left)* and Ivan, and their sister Mary in later life

"Kirkpatrick is said to be the brother of a Baronet (a Sir James Kirkpatrick) who, however, will not acknowledge him."

"The boys were sent to Leopold House, a Barnardo's home in East London, 10 days apart," Rob explains. "They remained together for six months before Ivan was shipped out to Sheppard House, also in East London, then a year later, he was boarded out to Tunbridge Wells in Kent."

Charles was sent to Buckenhill Farm Home in Bromyard, Herefordshire, in October 1891. The home trained children "in a Christian fashion" with "agricultural pursuits", ready for their new lives in Canada. "To my knowledge, this never happened to Charles. Barnardo's last record for him was that he left Buckenhill 'to situation' on 31 March 1896." Mystery still surrounds his movements after this, and where he was in the 1901 census.

Rob knows more about Charles' brother. "On 25 May 1898, aged 16, Ivan left for Brisbane, Australia. He shows up in shipping records for the *Duke of Argyle* as 'John Hearnden, aged 23'. His employer at Uanda Station sent back an employment report to Barnardo's."

And what about Matilda? Rob scoured the records and discovered that Tilt had been her stepfather's name. He spent months going through the death indexes and workhouse records, trying to find what became of her after the children left.

Workhouse Revelation

"I came across a 'Matilda Kirk'. My Matilda never married Kirkpatrick, but this name was close enough to catch my eye. It was an Islington Workhouse admission: 'Alleged Lunatics to Hagar Ward'." The record read, "Matilda Kirk. Admitted from Infirmary. Aunt, Honora Godfrey. 14 Cross St. Blackfriars Road."

Rob had come across Honor Godfrey (née Robinson) before – "She was my Matilda's maternal aunt. Matilda had been admitted under a false name. I can only assume this was done

UNP/RICHARD GRANGE

UNP/RICHARD GRANGE

intentionally, to spare the family shame. As a result, Matilda's fate lay undetected for 133 years."

Matilda died from pneumonia and delirium tremens in 1891, aged 34. "She's buried in an unmarked grave in an overgrown woodland patch of Islington and St Pancras Cemetery."

But what about Polly, Charles and Ivan's missing sister? "While searching the free Australian site Trove (**trove.nla.gov.au**), I stumbled upon the classified ad placed in *The Bulletin* by Mrs C Skingley." Rob checked who was living at the address given in the advert in the 1911 census, and found it was Mary and Charles Skingley.

A record search revealed that Mary's father was Joseph Nye, a watchmaker. The 1939 Register had her date of birth as 6 May 1884. But why was her surname Nye if her brothers' was Earnden? The 1891 census held a tantalising bit of evidence. Listed with Joseph and his wife Rachel was their daughter, aged six – Polly. Rob set about proving that Polly was Charles and Ivan's long-lost sister.

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

First, he ruled her out as the couple's biological daughter. "Then, I looked for a birth record for Mary Hearnden, but nothing. Lastly, I tried Kirkpatrick. There, with "Mary Ann Hearnden' in the first-names field, was our girl." The birthdate, everything, fitted. "It seemed Mary Kirkpatrick/Nye/Skingley, AKA Polly, had been adopted and built a good life. She married and raised a family in Writtle, Essex."

The Fourth Sibling

But that isn't where the story ends. On a hunch, Rob searched the birth records for other siblings for Charles, Ivan and Polly, and found a Matilda Hearnden who was born on 10 July 1880, to Matilda Hearnden formerly Tilt and a "Robert Hearnden". Although clear efforts had been made to provide false information – Robert was the middle name of Matilda senior's father – the baby's true father was presumably Charles Kirkpatrick. Rob has yet to find any sign of Matilda junior after her birth, but surely it's only a matter of time before he reunites her with her brothers and sister.

For Rob, the journey has been bittersweet. "Learning that we descend from the Closeburn baronets is exciting, but it's awful that the children were abandoned and separated. Despite everything, they built families of their own. And by all accounts, their children were well loved and thrived in ways that their parents never had the chance to."

Resources

These sites helped Rob uncover the secrets of his family history

Ancestry

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/60391/**

From the poverty-stricken to those who had fallen on hard times or needed medical care in the infirmary, an ancestor may appear in workhouse records. Rob got lucky with the collection 'London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764–1921'.

Barnardo's

w **barnardos.org.uk/get-support/services/making-connections-family-history-service**

Philanthropist Thomas Barnardo opened his first home for boys in 1870, and the children's charity's archives are a rich hunting ground for documents relating to sons and daughters of the poor. These include letters, photographs and records of individuals' time in care – including Rob's relations Charles and Ivan. Contact Barnardo's if you think your relative might have been a Barnardo's child.

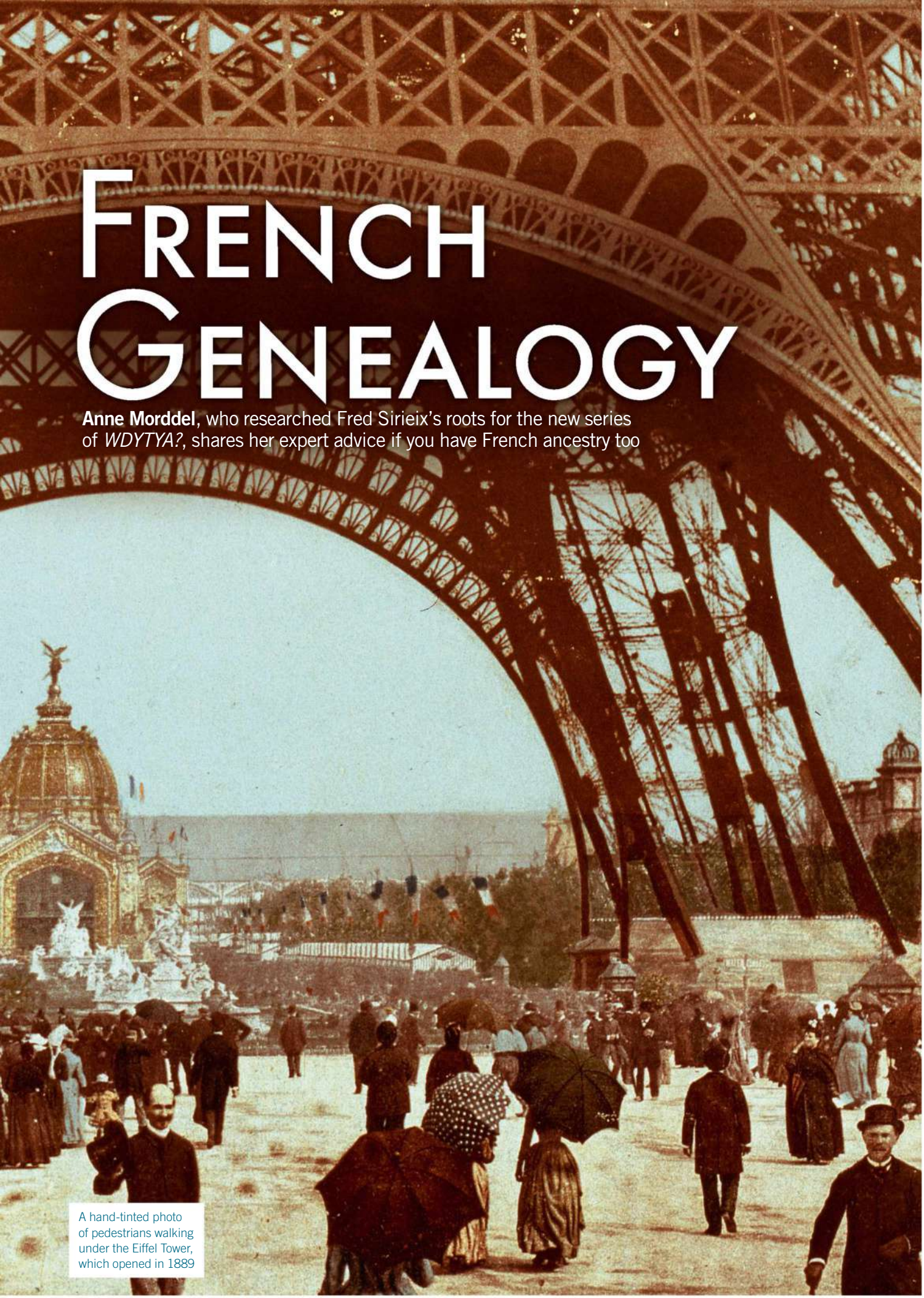
Trove

w **trove.nla.gov.au**

This central hub for archives and records from all over Australia is best known to family historians for its newspapers and gazettes archive, but the magazines and newsletters section is where Rob found Charles and Ivan's sister's advertisement appealing for news of her brother.

French Genealogy

Anne Morddel, who researched Fred Sirieix's roots for the new series of *WDYTYA?*, shares her expert advice if you have French ancestry too



A hand-tinted photo of pedestrians walking under the Eiffel Tower, which opened in 1889

GETTY IMAGES

Without question, every French genealogy research project begins with parish and civil registers. For some 250 years prior to the French Revolution (1787–1799), the Catholic Church in France, under a royal mandate of 1539, recorded in duplicate registers every Catholic person's baptism, marriage and burial. These registers of Catholicity *(registres de catholicité)* were kept in order to be able to determine who was Catholic and who was not. Protestant churches had their own registers, often kept in secret and frequently illegally. Registers recording life events were also maintained, at least to some extent, by the country's Jewish communities.

The bride's father congratulates his new son-in-law at a wedding in the French countryside during the 18th century

Registration Revolution

With the abolition of royal and church authority by the French Revolution, the registers were taken from the parish priests and the documentation of life events and identity became the prerogative of the state. One set of the parish registers was turned over to the newly created town halls *(mairies)* and the duplicate set, the clerk's copy (*copie du greffier)*, was placed in the (also newly created) regional departmental archives *(archives départementales)*. From about 1804, once Catholic churches were able to operate again, they kept new registers for those parishioners who wished it, but these were not legally required, nor legal proof of birth, marriage or death, and are not publicly available.

In 1792, civil registration was introduced to record all of the births, marriages and deaths that took place in France, no matter someone's religion. These replaced the parish registers. The three types of register entries *(actes d'état civil)* are birth *(acte de naissance)*, marriage *(acte de mariage)* and death *(acte de décès)*. ▶

In 1792, civil registration was introduced to record all births, marriages and deaths

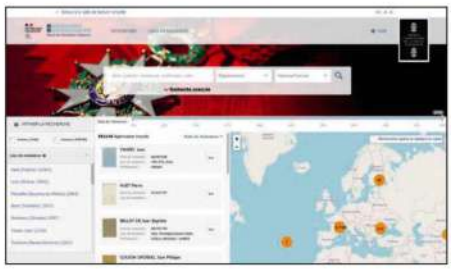
Expert Picks

Anna recommends these three websites for accessing key sources – and all of them are free to use

Archives Nationales Finding Aids

w **tinyurl.com/arch-nat-finding**

The national archive's online finding aids provide access to over eight million images. You can request a copy of the record you need if it has not been digitised.



Legion Of Honour Dossiers

w **tinyurl.com/arch-nat-honour**

These dossiers can contain copies of birth, marriage and death records, summaries of military service, and details of heroic acts. Nearly all of the records are digitised.

Mémoire Des Hommes

w **tinyurl.com/memories-des-hommes**

The website of France's military archives is a superb resource. It is constantly being updated, and volunteers work together to index the country's military records.

GETTY IMAGES

This postcard from the late 19th/early 20th century depicts life on a farm in Calvados, Normandy, north-west France

Each of these *actes* is an entry into a register, which is closed at the end of each year and a new one is begun in the new year. They contain a goodly amount of genealogical information: parents' names, professions, places of birth, ages, and the relationships of witnesses to the subjects. This is much more detail than is normally found in entries in parish and civil registers in Britain.

Check The Margins

From the mid-19th century, even more information was subsequently added to birth and marriage register entries in the form of marginal notes. In the case of births, these notes give the date and place of any later marriage, as well as the spouse's name. The date and place of the subject's death was also recorded, making the birth register entry a record of key genealogical information. Marriage register entries will have, in the marginal note, the date and place of a divorce and/or of subsequent marriages. Note too that in France women are always listed in civil records by their surname at birth, even if they are married.

This process of registration was duplicated exactly in French colonies such as Algeria in North Africa, Martinique in the West Indies, Pondichéry (now Puducherry) in India, and Saint-Domingue and Saint Martin, both in the Caribbean. Additionally, French citizens who lived abroad often chose to register their family's births, marriages and deaths with the closest French consulate. These are called the *actes d'état civil consulaire*.

Destroyed Archives

Many parish and civil archives have been destroyed over the centuries. Those of the department of Pas-de-Calais in northern France were severely damaged after Arras was bombed, during both world wars, and some of the archives burned. Those of the department of Manche in Normandy were destroyed when the archives were hit by Allied bombs during the Second World War. Perhaps most spectacularly, those of Paris containing some eight million registers were all lost in 1871, when the revolutionary government of the Paris Communards burned the City Hall to the ground. Immediately, efforts were begun to recreate them from other sources, such as notarial records and peoples' personal copies of register entries. About two million of the lost records were replaced. Those that are least

DID YOU KNOW?

Since 1792, a person's legal identity has been based on the information in their entry in the birth register. A court order is required to correct a misspelled name.

Fred Sirieix From *First Dates* To Genealogy

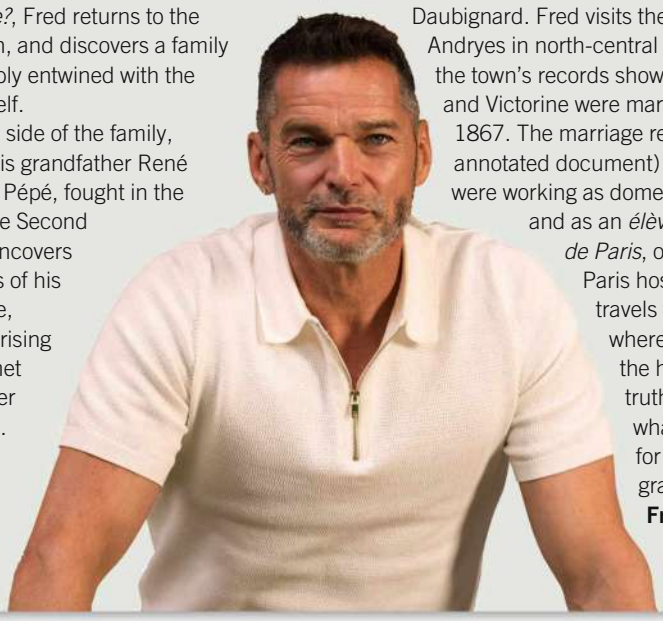
Find out more about one of the stars of the new series of *WDYTYA?* – and some of his discoveries

First Dates maître d' Fred Sirieix was born in Limoges, west-central France, in 1972, and trained to work in front of house in a Michelin-starred restaurant before coming to Britain when he was 20. In his episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, Fred returns to the country of his birth, and discovers a family history that is deeply entwined with the story of France itself.

On his mother's side of the family, he finds out that his grandfather René Bordas, known as Pépé, fought in the French Army in the Second World War. Fred uncovers the highs and lows of his military experience, including the surprising way in which he met Fred's grandmother Geneviève Charrié.

René's father Léonard Bordas also had a gruelling period of service during the First World War, but the episode covers more than just military matters and Fred discovers that he has ancestors who made wine in Burgundy.

Geneviève's great grandparents were Gustave Adolphe Eon and Victorine Eleonore Daubignard. Fred visits the town hall of Andryes in north-central France, where the town's records show that Gustave and Victorine were married on 30 April 1867. The marriage record (see the annotated document) states that they were working as domestic servants and as an *élève des Hospices de Paris*, or student of the Paris hospices. Fred travels to the capital where he learns the heartbreaking truth behind what that meant for his 3x great grandparents.

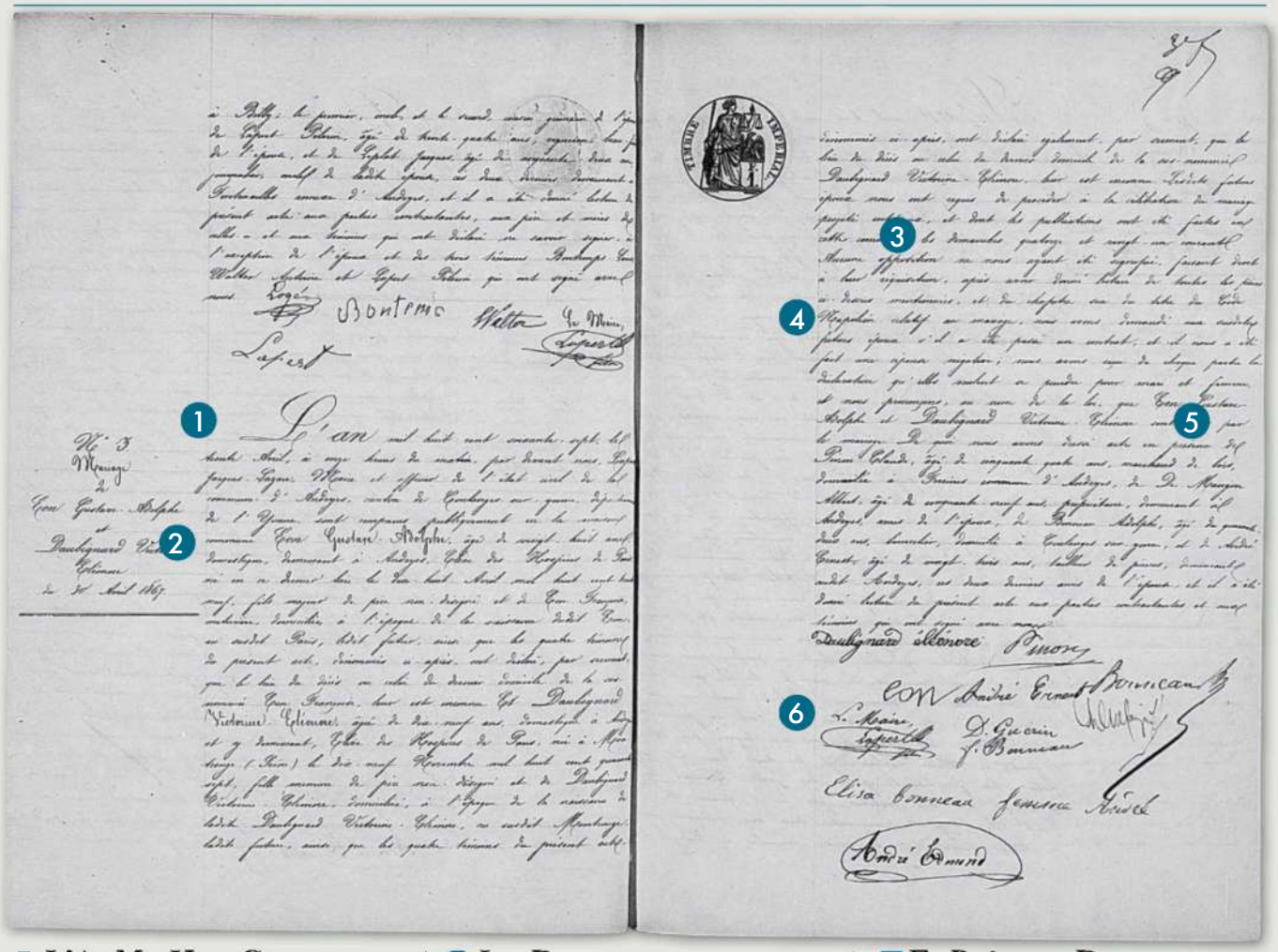


Fred Sirieix's episode airs on 27 May

GETTY IMAGES

Marriage Register, 1867

The marriage of Gustave Eon and Victorine Daubignard shows how much information 19th-century French marriage register entries can reveal. The record is available on the website of the Departmental Archives of Yonne (**archivesenligne.yonne.fr**)



1 L'An Mil Huit Cent...

The full date and location are given. A religious marriage for the same couple would have taken place on this date or afterwards, as the civil marriage, by law, must come first.

2 Eon

This section continues on the second page and contains the couple's full identity details, including their dates and places of birth and their parentage, as it all would have appeared on the copies of their birth register entries that they would have had to present.

3 Les Dimanches

The marriage banns were posted on the Sundays *(dimanches)* "of the 14th and the 21st of the current [month]". From 1792, banns were posted at the town hall, or *mairie*, not at the church, in the towns where each of the couple resided.

4 Code Napoléon

Chapter Six of the Code Napoléon, the *Code Civil*, was read out, consisting of the civil marriage vows that the couple had to agree to before being pronounced married.

5 En Présence De

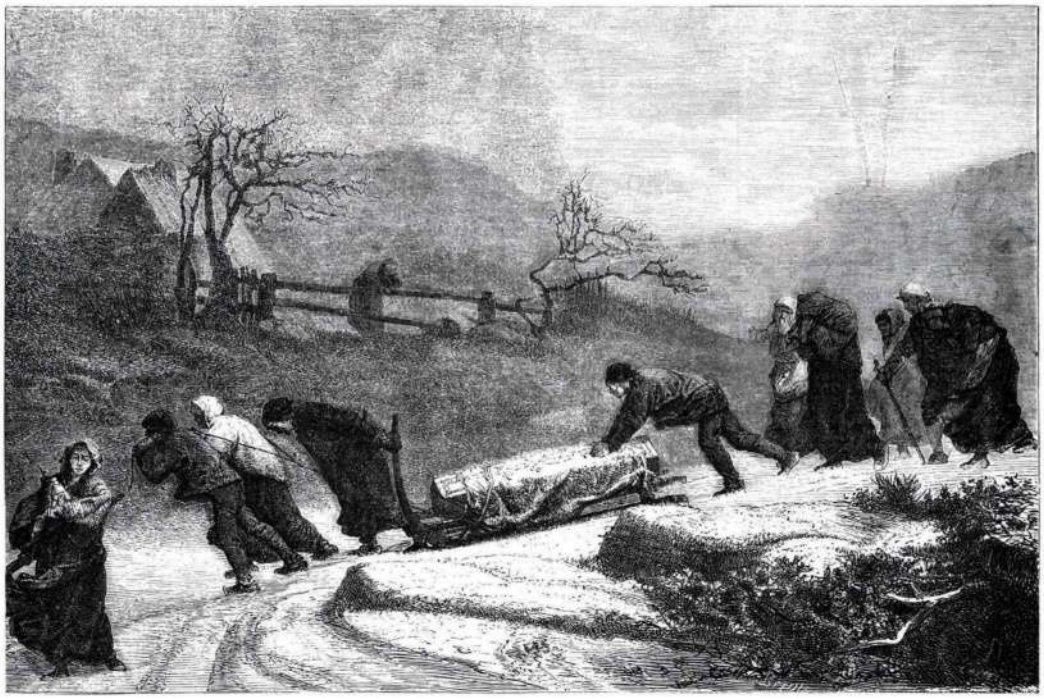
The identities, names, ages, professions and addresses of the witnesses (the word *témoins* may be used) who the ceremony took place "in the presence of" can be particularly helpful for genealogists. Never ignore the information in this section.

6 Signatures

The signatures usually include those of the couple, the officer and the witnesses, and can help you differentiate people of the same name in other records.

likely to have been replaced concern people who had no children or whose relatives had gone abroad, leaving no descendants in Paris to provide copies of documents.

Much of the information given in the parish and civil register entries may be considered primary, or first-hand, because those concerned were present and giving information about themselves, and/or presenting authenticating documents to the priest or officer writing the registration. In the case of birth registrations, the baby was often shown to the officer for verification of its viability and sex. In the case of deaths, the priest gave the last rites or the registering officer was often taken to see the corpse. For marriages, authenticated copies of the couples' birth registrations and their parents' death ▶



An engraving showing a funeral procession in the Vosges Mountains of eastern France, 1856

registrations (if they had died) had to be presented to the officer to confirm any claimed event that he could not verify by looking in the registers under his authority.

Access to civil registers for genealogists and other members of the public is restricted by law. Birth and marriage entries cannot be accessed for 75 years from the date the annual registers were closed; death registers may be accessed immediately.

Decennial Indices

When the civil registers began, the law also required an alphabetical surname index to them. One was created for each of the three types of register each year. This *Table annuelle* usually appears at the back of each annual register. Every decade, the annual indices are compiled into a *Table décennale*. The structure and style of alphabetising varies from one location to another, and from year to year. Nevertheless, they are a great aid to locating an entry in the registers. The 10-year indices have been microfilmed by most departmental archives, and are on their websites.

Online Access

Nearly all of the parish and civil registers of France have been microfilmed. The images have been digitised and published on websites owned and maintained by each repository for those records. The departmental archives hold the local registers, while Les Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (ANOM, or National Overseas Archives; **http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/anom/fr/**) holds the registers of the former colonies. The consular civil registers are preserved by the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France (**https://archivesdiplomatiques.diplomatie.gouv.fr/**).

Unfortunately, many of the websites of the departmental archives have recently been blocked to users from outside of France. However, many of their records are on commercial websites, such as Filae (**en.filae.com/v4/genealogie/HomePage.mvc/welcome**), Geneanet (**en.geneanet.org**) and affiliates.

Nearly all of the parish and civil registers of France have been microfilmed

TOP TIP!

Rather than the concept of a maiden name, French people use *nom de naissance* (birth name) for anyone, of either sex, with a different name to the one in the birth register.

ANNE MORDDEL is a US genealogist who now lives in France, and the creator of The French Genealogy Blog (**french-genealogy.typepad.com/genealogie/**)

Resources

Take your research further

BOOK

French Jewish Genealogy
Anne Morddel
Lulu, 2024
This is the latest of Anne's booklets, all published via Lulu (**lulu.com/spotlight/morddel**), covering various research topics and based on her blog posts. In English.

MUSEUM

MÉMORIAL DE LA SHOAH
a **17 rue Geoffroy l'Asnier, 75004 Paris**
t +33 1 42 77 44 72
w **www.memorialdelashoah.org/en/**
The museum examines the French experience of the Holocaust. Its website includes genealogical information and scanned records. Many languages, including English.

WEBSITES

FAMILYSEARCH
w **familysearch.org/en/wiki/France_Genealogy**
FamilySearch's wiki has useful advice for the country, including links to online records here and elsewhere. In English and French.

GENAMI
w **www.genami.org/en/**
The website of the French society GenAmi, the Jewish Genealogy Association, has helpful research guides. In French and English.

GÉNÉAWIKI
w **fr.geneawiki.com/wiki**
This is an encyclopaedic source of information, research guides and links. In French and German.

RETRONEWS
w **retronews.fr**
Here you can search scans of historical newspapers and magazines. In French.

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www.thegazette.co.uk/veday80

The Gazette is the UK's official public record dating back to 1665 and holds millions of notices which can help you learn more about your ancestors.

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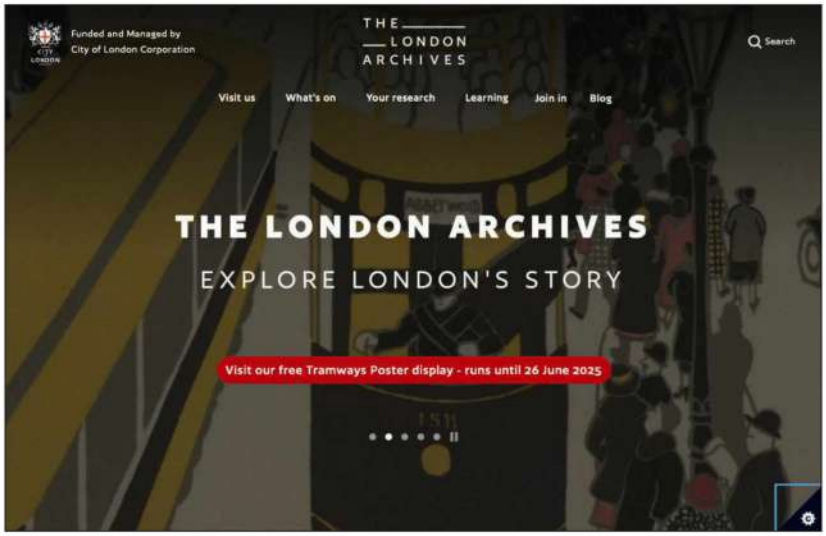
LONDON

The Royal Exchange in the City of London housed Lloyd's insurance market for 150 years

Jonathan Scott reveals the most useful sites to uncover the lives of London ancestors

Bury-born actor Layton Williams, a familiar face from *Strictly Come Dancing* and BBC Three's sitcom *Bad Education*, goes in search of his London roots in the latest series of *WDYTYA?*. If you also have Londoners in your tree, you'll know that researching in the capital presents unique challenges. The parishes, boroughs, parliamentary divisions, postal and registration districts – many of which change over time – can make tracing ancestors complicated. Throw in the huge numbers of migrants and transient workers, the many identical or similar road names, as well as changing or disappearing streets, and it all adds up to a confusing melting pot.

Even if you know exactly where a forebear lived and worked, records may be scattered across different archives depending on when and where they were created. Relevant material may reside at The London Archives, for example, or within the many borough collections across the capital, or even in record offices for surrounding counties such as Kent or Essex, whose historic fringes have been absorbed into Greater London.



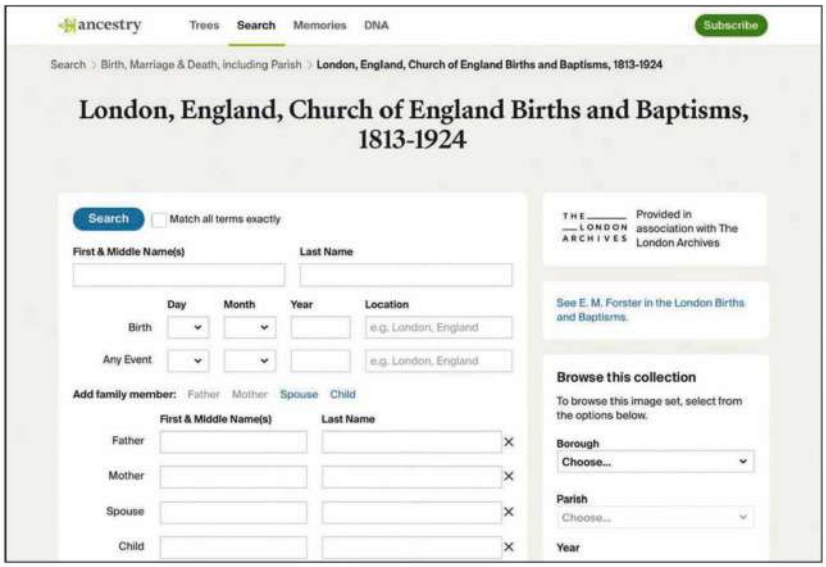
THE LONDON ARCHIVES

w **thelondonarchives.org**

The former London Metropolitan Archives culled 'Metropolitan' from its name last year, and the website has been given a rebrand and a complete, and very welcome, overhaul. Alongside the catalogue (**thelondonarchives.org/your-research/search-the-catalogue**), through which you can search more than 3.5 million documents, images, maps and films, there are exhibitions, articles, news and blogs. The web page for the current 'London in the Second World War' exhibition, which runs until 30 October, leads to digitised bomb-damage maps and air-raid report books, plus there's an article on the collections of the Peabody Trust, which built Victorian housing estates, as well as news of a collaboration with the Royal Institute of British Architects.

GETTY IMAGES

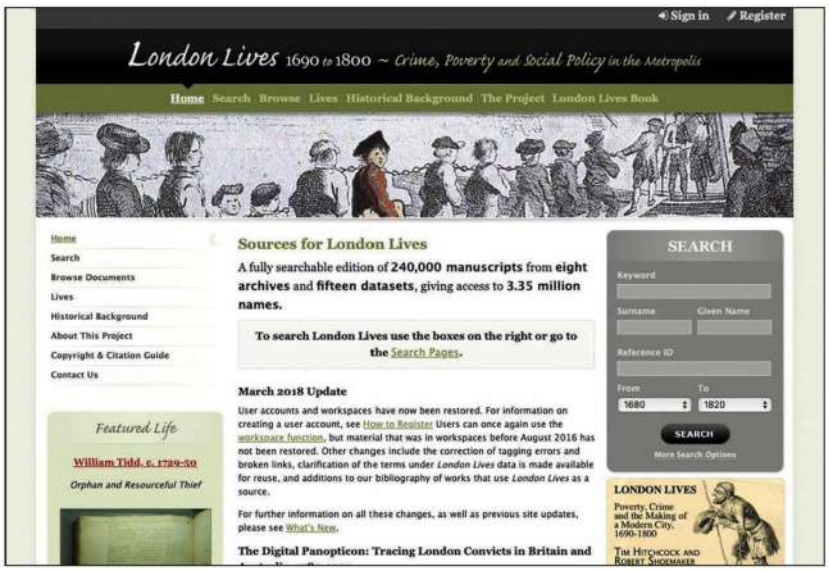
BEST WEBSITES



ANCESTRY

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1558**

Ancestry continues to dominate the London scene, and content from its partnership with The London Archives is regularly being added to the site. The collection 'London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1924', for example, was updated in March, and now boasts nearly 24 million records. The electoral-registers material, which spans 1832–1972, tops 217 million entries. Other datasets include admissions and discharges for schools and workhouses, city and county directories from the 18th century to the 1940s, and material from Westminster Archives (**westminster.gov.uk/archives**), which includes a further 5.5 million parish records.



LONDON LIVES

w **londonlives.org**

Here you can search names drawn from a wide range of sources for 18th-century London. The focus of the project is on poorer residents, and includes a range of parish and tax records as well as records from the trials heard at the Old Bailey. Some of the datasets that power this site have been incorporated into the Digital Panopticon (**digitalpanopticon.org**), which seeks to trace the lives of convicts sentenced at London's central criminal court between 1780 and 1925. And since 2019 the latter site has been bolstered by a tattoo database – meaning you can search detailed descriptions of tattoos worn by about 58,000 convicts.

EXPERT'S CHOICE

Elizabeth Burling is the chairman of the London Westminster & Middlesex Family History Society (**lwmfhs.org**)

Christ Church in Ealing was consecrated in 1852

The London Westminster & Middlesex Family History Society covers much of North London – namely the City of London, the City of Westminster, and the boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow and Islington, together with parts of Ealing and Hillingdon.

Family history societies are of course there to help people locate records of their ancestors. And our website (**lwmfhs.org**) contains some very useful and unique features to help researchers hunting for relations in this part of the world.

Click the 'Research' dropdown in the website's menu bar and you will find 'Which Place is Where'. If you are struggling to find out where somewhere in Greater London actually is, then this can help you. Just type the name of a place into the search box and the site will show you the ancient parish in which it was located, whether we cover the area, or which of the other seven London family history societies you would need to contact.

If you're looking in our neck of the woods, also under the 'Research' dropdown you will find 'Parishes'. Here the 149 ancient parishes are listed alphabetically. Each can be clicked to find detailed information about the area, local churches, dates of surviving records and where these can be found, often along with photographs.

Also on this page are links to all of the boroughs we cover, showing the ancient parishes – although the City of London is a work in progress.

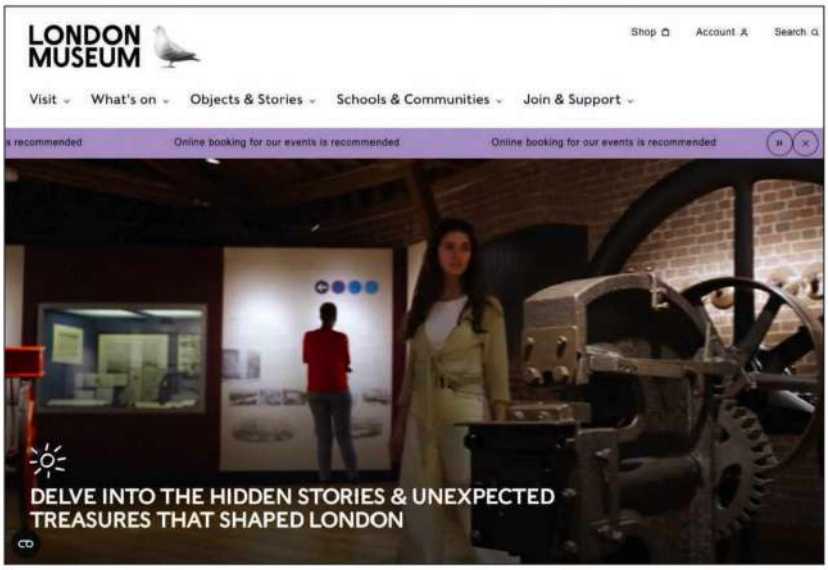
London has always been tricky because of its size, but this advice should help you get started.

GETTY IMAGES

DECEASED ONLINE

w **deceasedonline.com**

Although this burial and cremations records website hasn't had a makeover for some time, it still has an impressive amount of data under the hood. If you click the 'Coverage' header at the top of the homepage you can see some of the collections recently added to the database. London-centric examples include the Royal Borough of Greenwich collection, which was updated in March 2023 and totals some 473,000 names. Deceased Online also has excellent coverage from London's 'Magnificent Seven' – vast municipal cemeteries founded in the Victorian period in Abney Park, Brompton, Highgate, Kensal Green, Nunhead, Tower Hamlets and West Norwood.



LONDON MUSEUM

w **londonmuseum.org.uk**

Via this website you can browse museum objects, stories and research guides, and find out more about two research collections that the museum looks after: the Sainsbury Archive and the Port and River Archive. The latter comprises material related to the Port of London and the River Thames, with a "strong focus on the Docklands area". There's also news of the museum's move to Smithfield in the City of London. Permanent galleries are due to open in the Victorian General Market in 2026. The 1960s Poultry Market, which will house temporary exhibitions, collections and a learning centre, is due in 2028.

Go Further

More sites to help you uncover your London roots

AIM25

w **aim25.com**

The website Archives in London and the M25 Area has information about the material held by schools, societies, local authorities, cultural organisations and livery companies.

BRITISH HISTORY ONLINE

w **british-history.ac.uk**

BHO has a host of digitised volumes relating to London, not least 45 books from the London Record Society (**londonrecordsociety.org.uk**).

CHARLES BOOTH'S LONDON

w **booth.lse.ac.uk**

Explore maps and notebooks from Booth's 'Inquiry into Life and Labour in London'.

LAYERS OF LONDON

w **layersoflondon.org**

Here you can access historic maps of the city.

LOCATING LONDON'S PAST

w **locatinglondon.org**

Search digital resources relating to the history of early modern and 18th-century London.

LONDON PICTURE ARCHIVE

w **londonpicturearchive.org.uk**

Browse more than 250,000 images from The London Archives and the Guildhall Art Gallery. Also try **londonsscreenarchives.org.uk** and **https://boroughphotos.org**.

OLD BAILEY ONLINE

w **oldbaileyonline.org**

Search records of 197,752 criminal trials.

RECORDS OF LONDON'S LIVERY COMPANIES ONLINE

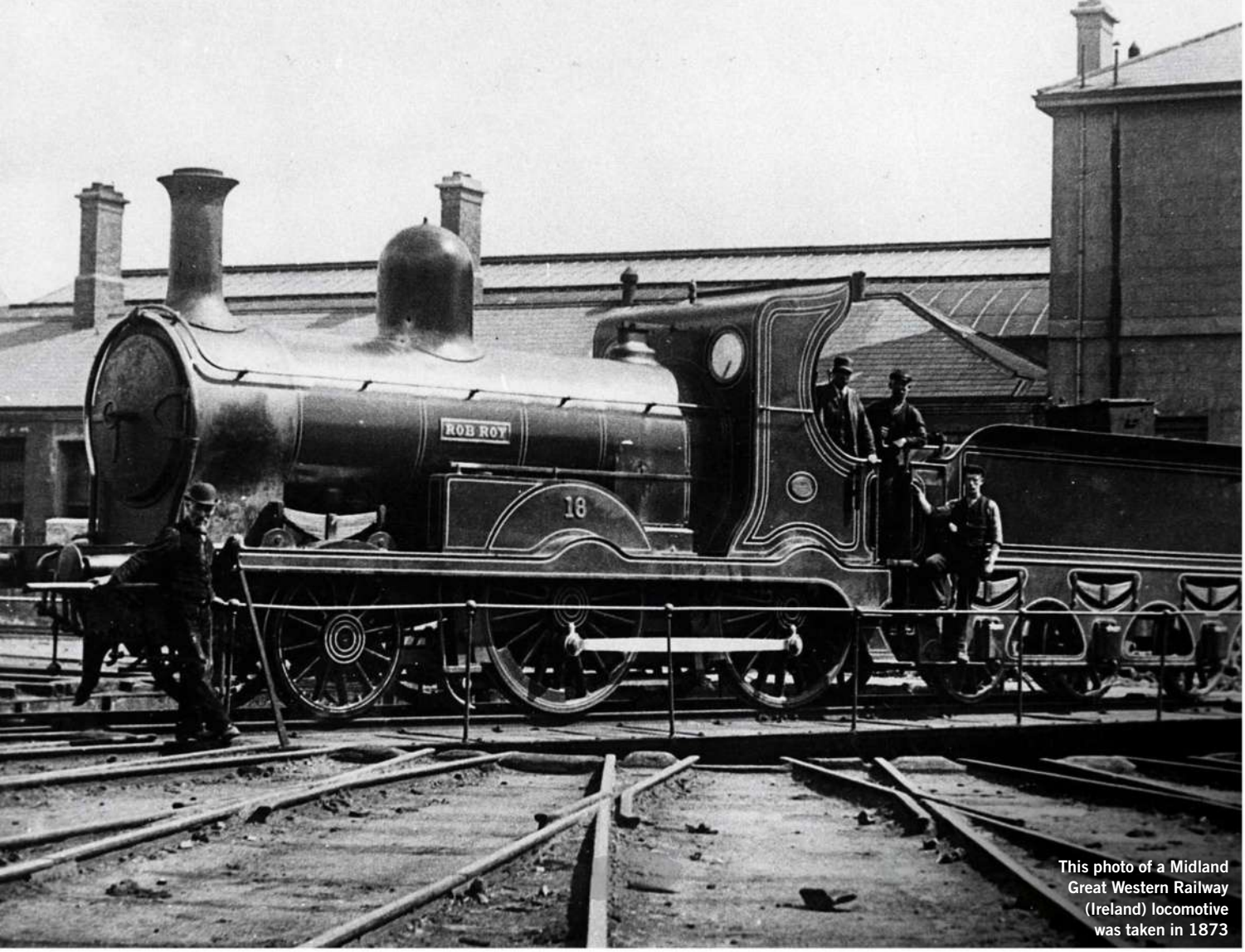
w **londonroll.org**

Explore a database of apprentices and freemen in City of London companies (1400–1900).

SOCIETY OF GENEALOGISTS

w **sog.org.uk**

SOG's holdings include Boyd's Inhabitants of London and London City Apprenticeships.



This photo of a Midland Great Western Railway (Ireland) locomotive was taken in 1873

Irish Railway Staff Records

Ian Waller tells the story of the growth of the railways in Ireland, and how you can use an online collection to research your relative's railway career

A collection of more than 300,000 Irish railway staff records is now available online via Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62687/**). The material in 'Ireland, Railway Employment Records, 1870–1940' is held by the Irish Railway Record Society (IRRS; **irrs.ie**), and enables research into the lives of railway ancestors including footplatemen, inspectors, clerks, porters, signalmen and platelayers. Most of the records relate to railway employment in southern Ireland, although there are records of the Great Northern Railway in Northern Ireland in the collection too.

Ireland's railway system began in 1834 and continued to develop into the early years of the 20th century, with various private companies expanding the network. Each firm kept its own records, so their content varies, and not all the records survive for every company. Records also vary in scope and content even within the same companies. Some records are single-line entries in department ledgers that only provide minimal information, such as name and wage. Others are much more comprehensive.

During the period of 'railway mania' hundreds of miles of track were laid in the 1840s, but the economic impact of events such as the Great Famine (1845–1852) drastically curtailed their development, and industry recovery was slow.

Changes to company structures occurred as a result of amalgamations or takeovers, so it is important for researchers to understand how these can affect which records to research. In 1876 the Great Northern Railway (Ireland) was formed, the result of the grouping of the Irish North Western Railway, the Ulster Railway and the Dublin and Drogheda ▶

Records vary in scope and content even within the same companies

GETTY IMAGES

Staff Record, 1905

John Kennedy worked for the Great Southern and Western Railway. This character sheet is preserved by the Irish Railway Record Society (**irrs.ie**) and available digitally on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**)

1 Character Sheet

The sheet provides information on the employee, the division number and the type of employment/ occupation – here, the gangs John worked in. He was a milesman responsible for track maintenance.

2 Personal Details

Questions 1–7 record personal information about the employee including year of birth, literacy and physical health, and remarks from the half-yearly inspector.

3 Previous Employment

Particularly useful for family historians, Question 8 records the former occupation (sometimes naming the employer) and the reason that the worker left.

4 First Employment

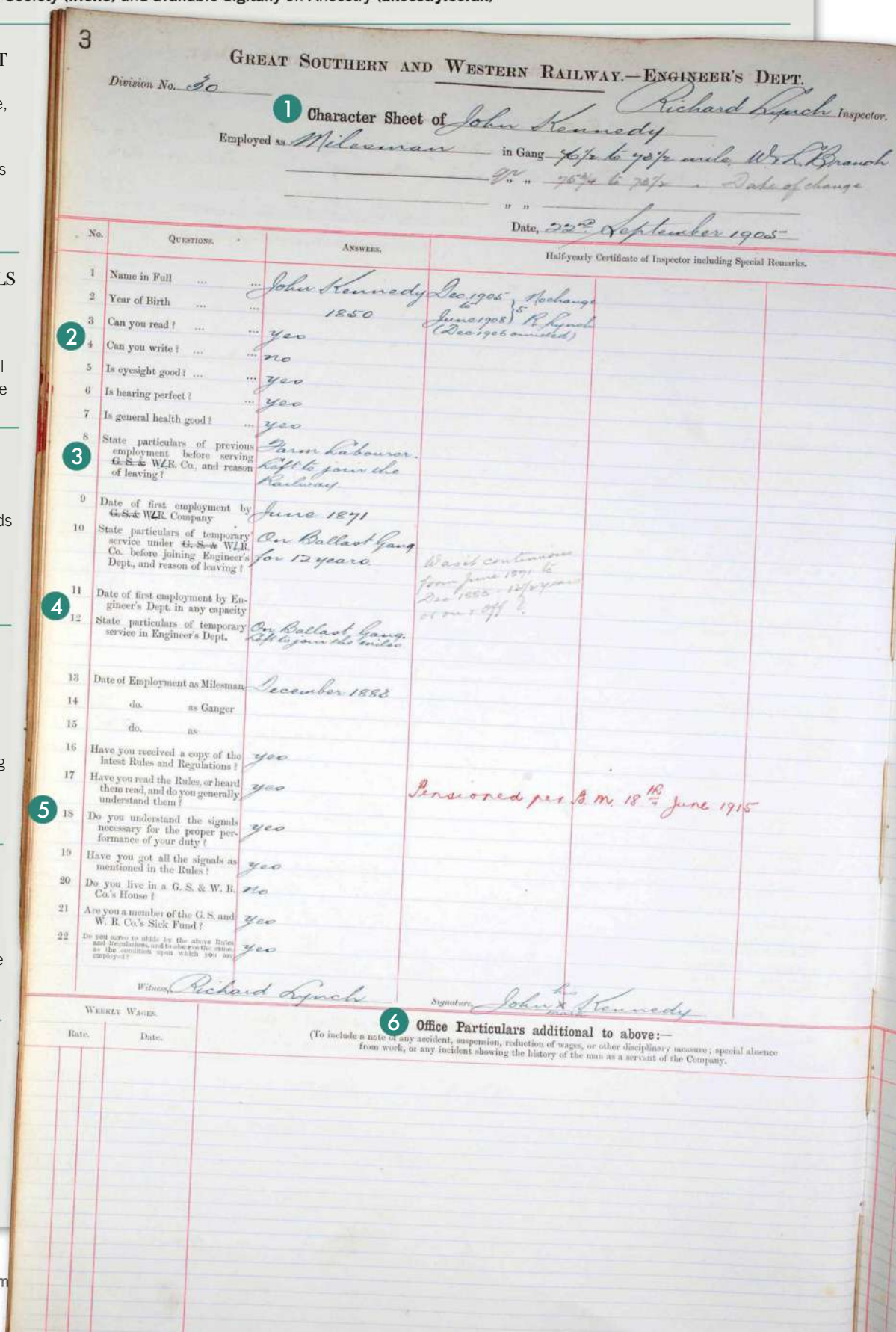
Questions 9–15 relate to actual railway service from the date of the worker's initial employment, including temporary service. The additional remarks can also be revealing.

5 Rules

Emphasis was placed upon rules and regulations, so confirmation was needed via Questions 16–22 that the employee understood and would abide by the rules.

6 Office Particulars

Although incomplete in this instance, this section is where wages and accidents are recorded, and other incidents detailed during employment.



3

Great Southern and Western Railway.—Engineer's Dept.

Division No. 30

1 Character Sheet of John Kennedy Richard Lynch Inspector.

Employed as Milesman in Gang 40½ to 45½ mile, W.R. Branch

" " 75¾ to 70½ Date of change

" "

Date, 22nd September 1905

No.	Questions.	Answers.	Half-yearly Certificate of Inspector including Special Remarks.
1	Name in Full	John Kennedy	
2	Year of Birth	1850	
3	Can you read?	yes	
4	Can you write?	no	
5	Is eyesight good?	yes	
6	Is hearing perfect? ...	yes	
7	Is general health good? ...	yes	
8	State particulars of previous employment before serving ~~G. S. & W.R.~~ W.R. Co., and reason of leaving?	Farm Labourer. Left to join the Railway	
9	Date of first employment by ~~G. S. & W.R.~~ W.R. Company	June 1871	
10	State particulars of temporary service under ~~G. S. & W.R.~~ W.R. Co. before joining Engineer's Dept., and reason of leaving?	On Ballast Gang for 12 years	
11	Date of first employment by Engineer's Dept. in any capacity		
12	State particulars of temporary service in Engineer's Dept.	On Ballast Gang. Left to join the Mile	
13	Date of Employment as Milesman	December 1882	
14	do. as Ganger		
15	do. as		
16	Have you received a copy of the latest Rules and Regulations?	yes	
17	Have you read the Rules, or heard them read, and do you generally understand them?	yes	
18	Do you understand the signals necessary for the proper performance of your duty?	yes	
19	Have you got all the signals as mentioned in the Rules?	yes	
20	Do you live in a G. S. & W. R. Co.'s House?	No	
21	Are you a member of the G. S. and W. R. Co.'s Sick Fund?	yes	
22	Do you agree to abide by the above Rules and Regulations, and to observe the same as the condition upon which you are employed?	yes	

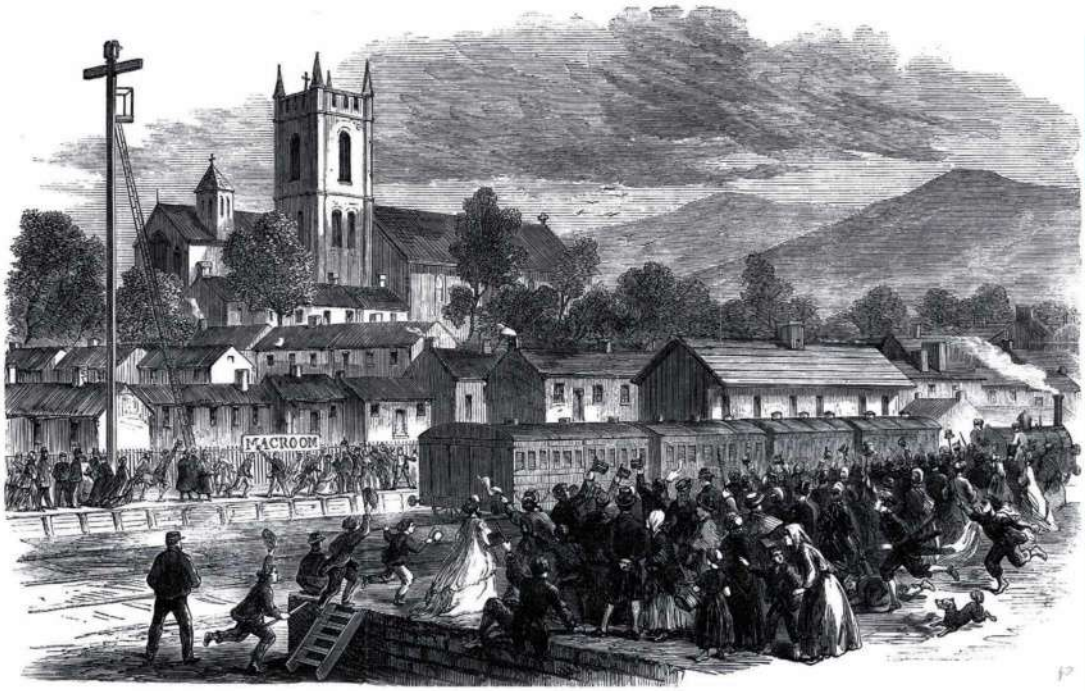
Witness Richard Lynch Signature John Kennedy

Weekly Wages. Rate. Date.

6 Office Particulars additional to above:—

(To include a note of any accident, suspension, reduction of wages, or other disciplinary measure; special absence from work, or any incident showing the history of the man as a servant of the Company.)

Pensioned per B.M. 18th June 1915



The first train arrives at Macroom in County Cork following the opening of the Cork and Macroom Direct Railway in 1866

Railway. Later, in 1901, the Great Southern and Western Railway purchased the Waterford, Limerick and Western Railway, and two years later in 1903 the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway was bought by the Midland Railway to become the Midland Railway (Northern Counties).

Following the 1921 Railways Act, the Midland Railway became part of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway of Great Britain in 1923. Ultimately in 1925 all of the railway companies within the Irish Free State grouped together to become the Great Southern Railways, but the cross-border lines and those lines wholly within Northern Ireland were unaffected.

In 1945 the Great Southern Railways was amalgamated with the Dublin United Transport Company to form Córas Iompair Éireann, which was the forerunner of the current rail network.

Record Availability

Although the railways existed from 1834, staff records really only exist between 1870 and the 1940s (you may find the odd record set in local archives). The digitised records in some cases include those working on tramways and omnibus or trucking companies operated by the railway companies.

The records also reflect a period of significant change in Ireland, including information on employment during the 1913 Dublin Lock-out, an industrial dispute involving some 20,000 workers, the 1916 Easter Rising and the First World War. During the Irish Civil War (1922–1923) many trains were ambushed, tracks destroyed, and employees captured or held at gunpoint. The records can provide a real insight into how your forebears were affected by these events.

The private companies served different areas, so it is crucial to identify where your relations both lived and worked to enable the correct company records to be researched. Each firm kept independent records, which often include more information about an employee's work history, wages, promotions, merits, discipline, accidents, retirement and so on.

If your ancestor was employed during 1870–1940 then most records in this collection should provide the following information: their name; birthdate (sometimes just the year) and place of birth (many births will predate the start of civil registration in 1864, and these records may be the only source of such information); date and place of death, which may include workers who died in an accident while working away from home; occupation and status; stations or depots where they worked; salaries or wages, showing increments throughout their careers; dates of commencement of employment, plus any transfers and termination; and disciplinary actions and awards for good service etc. In many records additional information will be revealed, including sick leave and trade-union membership. Some staff records may also provide details from other personnel files.

The IRRS also holds other company records, photos, route maps and so on, and is based at Heuston Station, Dublin. See the society's website for details.

TOP TIP!

Search The National Archives' catalogue for 'Ireland railway records' to find further records of Ireland's railways in archives throughout Britain: **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**.

Resources

Take your research further

BOOK

Irish Railways: A New History
Tom Ferris
Gill & Macmillan, 2008
This book is a valuable guide to the early expansion of the rail network, its decline and its recovery. It can be borrowed for free from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-rail-ferris**.

WEBSITES

IRISH RAILWAY RECORD SOCIETY (IRRS)
w **irrs.ie/resources/irish-railway-factsheets/**
The society's site includes information about individual companies such as their history, insignia photos and further resources.

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND
w **steamtrainsireland.com/museum-tickets/learning/irish-railway-history**
The society's website includes an extremely useful brief history from 1834 to the modern day, with a map and timeline.

IAN WALLER is a retired professional genealogist and vice chair of the Family History Federation, which supports the work of family history societies (**familyhistoryfederation.com**)

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Q&A

Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

Anthony Adolph is a professional genealogist and the author of 11 books

Paul Blake is the author of *Tracing Your Insolvent Ancestors*

Katherine Cobb is a member of AGRA based in Somerset

Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist

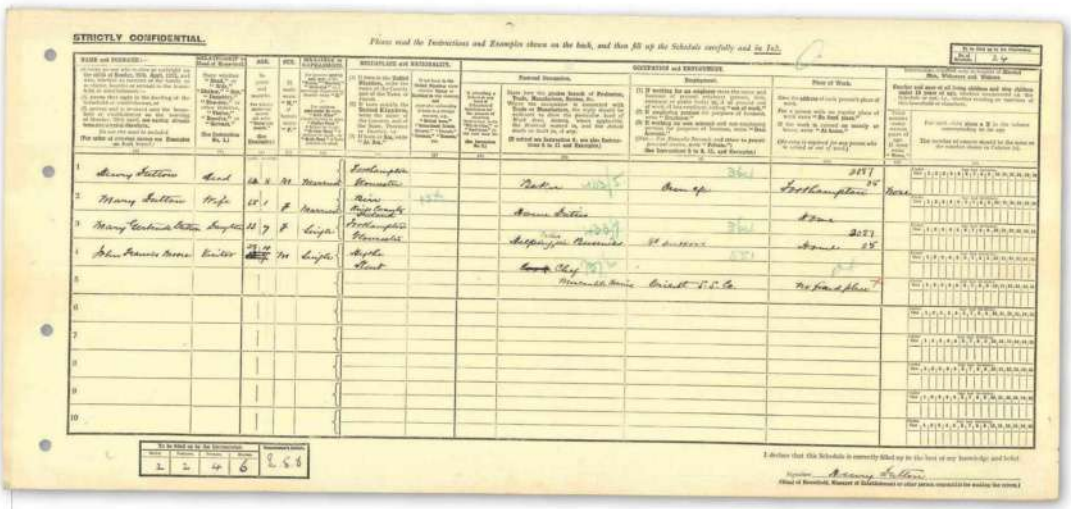
Alan Stewart is a family history writer, and author of *Grow Your Own Family Tree*

Steve Thomas is a genealogist with over 20 years' experience

Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author

What happened to John Francis Moore?

Q John Francis Moore was born on 5 February 1891 in Hythe, Kent, to John Moore and Jane Skirving. He enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment in March 1908. The story was that he was killed in France in 1918. However, he is in the 1921 census visiting his Aunt Mary and Henry Dutton in Forthampton, near Tewkesbury. I can't find any record of him after that. Can you help?
Michael Marsh


STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Michael emailed us this 1921 census entry for John Francis Moore, after which he seemed to disappear from the records

A As John had visited his aunt and uncle in Forthampton in 1921, I looked at newspapers for bereavement announcements and found a funeral report for Mary Dutton in the 7 February 1931 edition of the *Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic*. Although many mourners were named, John was not among them. This was also the case with Mary's husband, who died in 1932.

I found John's mother, Jeannie Moore, in the 1921 census as a patient in the Royal Free Hospital, London. However, I can find no obituary for either of his parents.

I suggest that you search the newspapers at Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) or **Newspapers.com** (also available with an 'All Access' subscription to Ancestry; **ancestry.co.uk**) for any mention of John in reports of the deaths of his various siblings. His sister, Isabella Gertrude, died in 1953; sister Winifred in 1963; and brother Alexander Skirving Moore in 1972. The latter is listed as a Freemason from 1921 in the United Grand Lodge of England's membership registers on Ancestry, which may be a further source of family information.

I don't normally recommend using information from other people's Ancestry trees, because many contain obvious errors. There is a tree containing John Francis Moore's family, though, which I suggest you look at (it'll be fairly obvious which one).

According to this tree, John was married to Janet Dobson Bailey (née Palmer), born in 1896 in Saltwood, Hythe, daughter of Blanche E Palmer. Janet was living with her mother and siblings at the time of the 1901, 1911 and 1921 censuses, and the 1929 electoral register.

In the 1939 Register, Janet was in Dover, Kent, working as a restaurant manageress. She died on 16 August 1986 at Elm Lea Residential Home, Saltwood, leaving £40,000. I was unable to find a marriage for her and John, but this possible relationship may be worth investigating further – perhaps contact the tree owner.

Finally, there are several records for men named John Moore in Findmypast's 'British Armed Forces and Overseas Deaths and Burials' collection that you may like to check.
Alan Stewart

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL? Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.

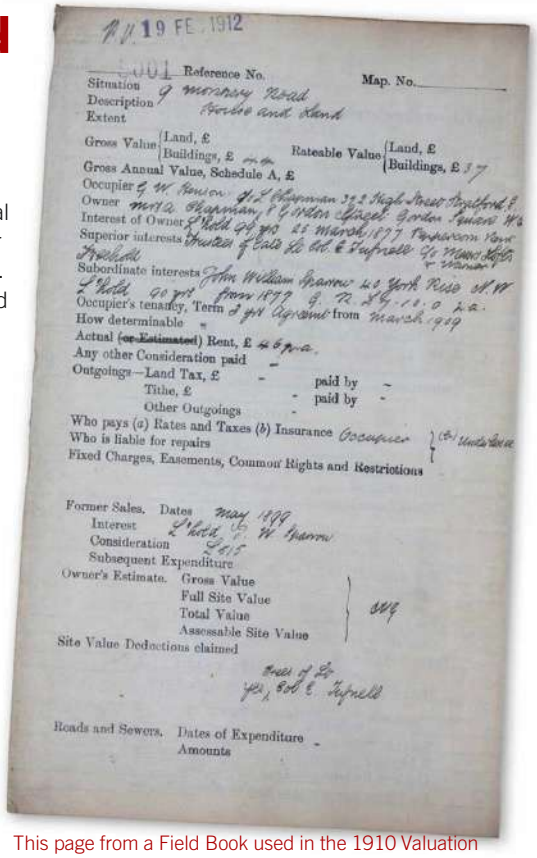
Can I find out when a place was surveyed for Lloyd George's Domesday Survey?

Q How can I find out when a particular area of the country was surveyed for the 1910 Valuation Office Survey? The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**) indicates that the individual surveys were carried out between 1910 and 1915, but in its online catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) the Field Books (series IR 58) are all dated 1910.
Martin Gething

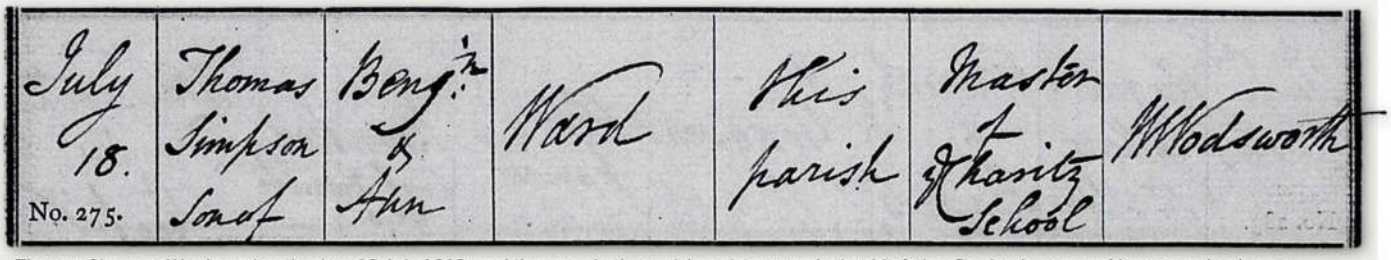
A The 1909–1910 Finance Act introduced legislation, the main object of which was the proposal to introduce a tax at 20 per cent on the increase in the value of a property between 30 April 1909 and when it was sold. The initial survey – commonly known as the Lloyd George Domesday Survey – recorded the value of all UK property as at 30 April 1910. This original land-valuation exercise was not completed until August 1915.

There are three sets of records resulting from the survey: the Valuation Office Plans, the Field Books and the Valuation Books. Two sets of plans were created. Those used as working documents during the original valuation, where they survive, are held at local archives. Surviving record plans created after the valuation was completed are held at TNA. The Field Books contain information collected about properties during the survey, and are held at TNA as well.

The first item on the second page of the Field Book entry, "Particulars, description and notes made on inspection", is usually dated. There is often a date written, sometimes stamped on the fourth page. If the property you are interested in does not include a date, then check other properties in the same Field Book. The date of the edition of the Ordnance Survey map used is printed at its head and this may be a clue, at least that the survey was made after that date. Surviving Valuation Books, with the exception of London and Westminster at TNA, are again held locally. The Field Books are gradually being digitised and added to **thegenealogist.co.uk**.
Paul Blake


19 FEB 1912
Reference No.
Map. No.
Situation
Description
Extent
Gross Value
Land, £
Buildings, £
Rateable Value
Land, £
Buildings, £
Gross Annual Value, Schedule A, £
Occupier
Owner
Interest of Owner
Superior interests
Subordinate interests
Occupier's tenancy, Term
How determinable
Actual (or Estimated) Rent, £
Any other Consideration paid
Outgoings—Land Tax, £
Tithe, £
Other Outgoings
Who pays (a) Rates and Taxes (b) Insurance
Who is liable for repairs
Fixed Charges, Easements, Common Rights and Restrictions
Former Sales. Dates
Interest
Consideration
Subsequent Expenditure
Owner's Estimate. Gross Value
Full Site Value
Total Value
Assessable Site Value
Site Value Deductions claimed
Roads and Sewers. Dates of Expenditure
Amounts

This page from a Field Book used in the 1910 Valuation Office Survey is stamped with the date 19 Feb 1912


July 18. No. 275. | Thomas Simpson Son of | Benj.n & Ann | Ward | this parish | Master of Charity School | W Wodsworth

Thomas Simpson Ward was baptised on 18 July 1819, and the entry in the parish register reveals that his father Benjamin was working as a schoolmaster

What was Benjamin Ward doing in Rye?

Q Benjamin Ward, my ancestor, was born in London in 1785 to Joseph and Jane Ward. He met Ann Colegate (born 1787, Icklesham, Sussex) while he was living in Rye/Romney Marsh, East Sussex. They were married at St Margaret's, Westminster, London, in 1815 and had two children there. From 1817, Benjamin was a schoolmaster in Sandwich, Kent. But what was he doing in Rye and Romney Marsh in 1804–1809?
Diane M Jenkins

A Prior to civil registration and 10-yearly censuses, often the only records of a person are of their baptism, marriage and burial. So establishing why Benjamin was in Sussex may not be possible. However, there are some avenues to try. As he was the youngest of Joseph and Jane's children to be baptised at St James's, Piccadilly, consider whether the family moved to Sussex. In 1799, John, son of Joseph and Jane Ward, was baptised at Beckley, five miles from Rye. Was he Benjamin's brother?

Or did Benjamin move to Sussex as a young man, either as an apprentice, or for work? From 1710 until the early 1800s, registers were kept of the tax paid for an apprentice's indenture. Detailing both masters and apprentices, these registers, available on subscription websites, can be used when searching for an ancestor's occupation. Unfortunately, there is no record that he served an apprenticeship.

Perhaps Benjamin worked as a teacher in Sussex; however, you'd need the name of the school(s) to know which records to search. In the early 19th century, numerous small schools and academies existed. Their names can sometimes be found in local newspapers, such as that of "Mr Jenkins, Rye" mentioned in the *Sussex Advertiser* in 1802. It's unlikely records from these schools have survived, although it is worth checking the online catalogue of The Keep in Brighton (**thekeep.info**). You may have more success if Benjamin worked at an established college or grammar school, because these institutions often have their own archives. Also, check whether a volume of the Victoria County History exists for Rye (**british-history.ac.uk**). If so, details of schools should be found in the parish entries; otherwise, try county directories.
Katherine Cobb

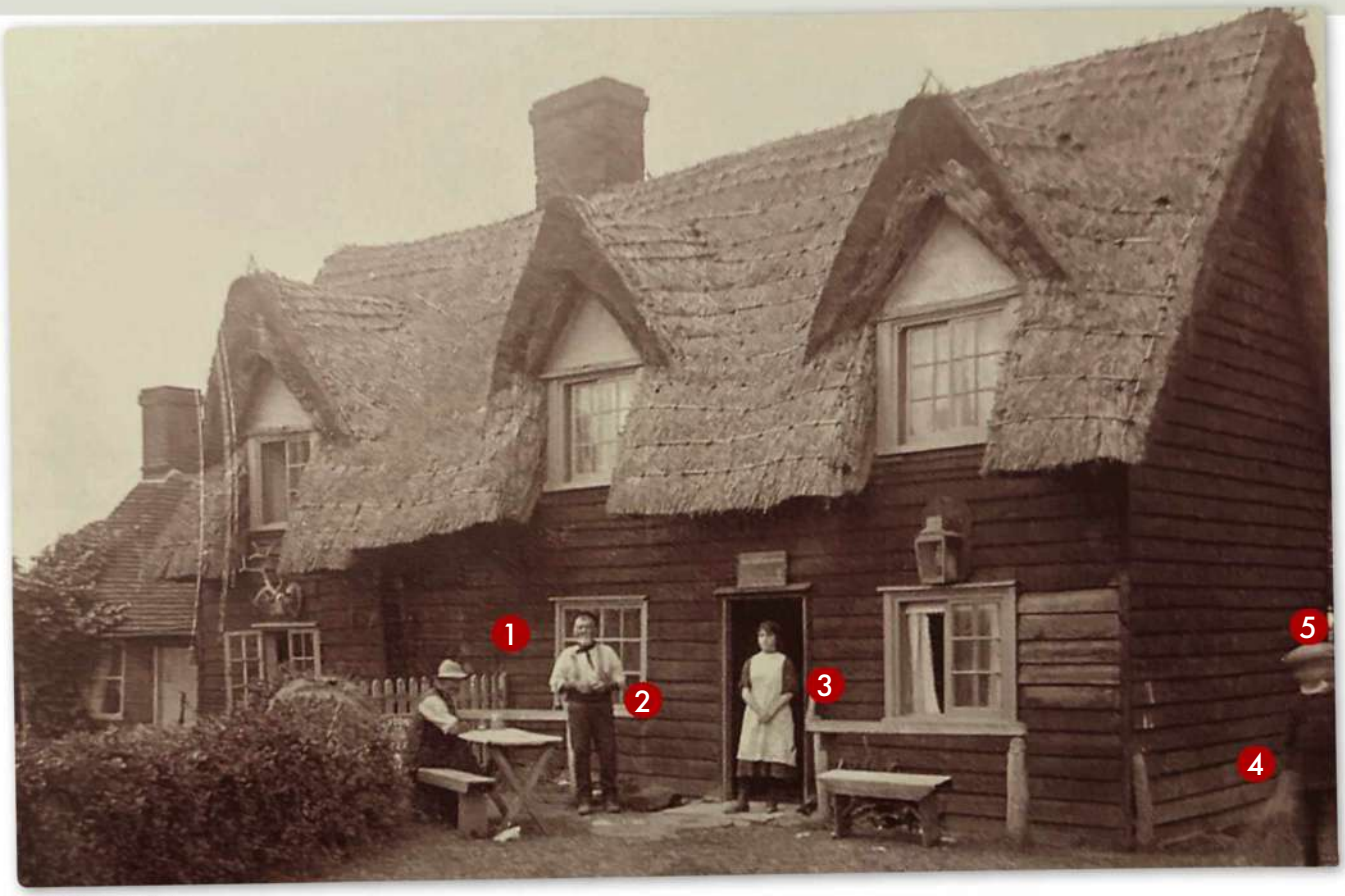
Picture Analysis

When was this photo of a pub taken?

Q I wonder if you can estimate when the attached photo might have been taken? It is set outside the Huntsman and Hounds Inn in Althorne, Essex.
Tom Fitton

A Picturesque images like this, showing figures in an identified outdoor location, can be of direct significance to family history if ancestors are potentially present, but are also important for studying local history. You don't explain this photograph's provenance: perhaps it was inherited, but it could be one of the highly collectable vintage local-interest postcards of which there are typically multiple copies and are nowadays traded online. Given the broader interest in such images, I always search the web. I found exact copies on various sites, for example the James Bentley Archive, "home to one of the largest and most significant collections of vintage photographic pictures in the UK": **tinyurl.com/jb-arch-huntsman**. This version includes the pub name and its location handwritten by the photographer, unnamed, but who was undoubtedly a local professional.

Nowhere is this photo dated, but the British Listed Buildings database describes the 16th-century building seen here as a beer-house by 1869 and named the Huntsman and Hounds by 1897: **britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101337442-the-huntsmen-and-hounds-public-house-latchingdon**. So it was taken no earlier than the late 1800s, and in reality such photographs are often early 20th-century postcard scenes. Indeed, the dress worn by the various figures here indicates a timespan of mid-1910s to early/mid-1920s.
Jayne Shrimpton



1 SUBJECTS

Accurately dating outdoor scenes requires assessing the appearance of its human subjects. Here are four people: a young barmaid/inn employee, two male inn patrons and a schoolboy onlooker *(far right)*.

2 MALE DRESS

The two men are dressed for agricultural or outdoor rural labour: their jackets have been removed, and their sleeves rolled up. The pale-coloured felt or straw-brimmed hat is typical of the 1910s/1920s.

3 FEMALE ATTIRE

Beneath her work apron, the woman wears a skirt with calf-length hemline and looks to have short hair – both important fashion details firmly indicating a date of at least the mid-1910s.

4 CHILDREN'S CLOTHES

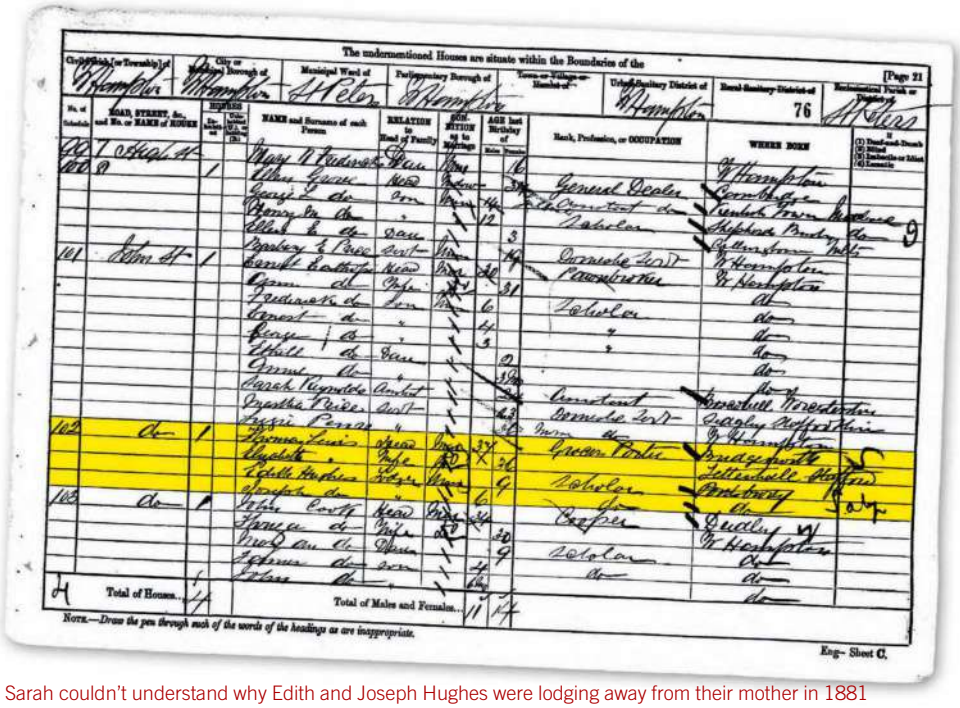
Children often wanted to be in the picture! The schoolboy we can glimpse on the edge of the photo wears the traditional cloth jacket, knickerbockers and dark woollen stockings that gradually became outmoded during and after the First World War.

5 BOY'S CAP

The boy's cloth cap also provides a helpful dating clue, this distinctive flat, wide style developed during the 1910s and remained fashionable in the 1920s and beyond.

Why was my great great grandmother lodging outside the family aged nine?

Q My great great grandmother, Edith Hughes (born 1871, Pontesbury, Shropshire), and her brother, Joseph (born 1874), were living as "Lodgers" with the Lewis family in 1881. How would they have come to be with them? The children's father Joseph was still alive, but not living with their mother, Elizabeth, who I can't find.
Sarah Corrigan


The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the

[Page 21

76

Sarah couldn't understand why Edith and Joseph Hughes were lodging away from their mother in 1881

A Formal, legal adoptions date from 1926. Before then, there were legally binding adoption indentures much like apprenticeships for children aged nine and upwards, but equally an adoption might just be arranged pragmatically and unofficially. So it's no surprise to find that two children of a broken marriage were living with an otherwise childless couple.

The fact that the siblings were "Lodgers" indicates that their bed and board were paid for by a third party. According to your research, the parents either separated or the mother had died and Joseph Hughes senior had embarked on a new relationship.

In effect, right up until 1983, anybody could legally arrange an adoption. At this time, it was more likely that the extended family would take them on, or perhaps pay for their keep elsewhere. If this was not possible then the Poor Law board of guardians might do so. The poor and destitute could not be given outdoor relief unless they could not support themselves, and clearly these two children fell into this category. Usually, they would be admitted to a workhouse unless somebody stepped in to prevent this.

There was an extended Edwards family in Pontesbury headed by their uncle William and including their grandmother, Martha, but for some reason the children lived with this couple in Wolverhampton. The family may have paid for them, or the board of guardians may have found it economically expedient to keep them off their books. You could look for records of this in the Atcham Union collection at Shropshire Archives in Shrewsbury (**www.shropshirearchives.org.uk**).

You might also consider that the couple who took them in, Thomas and Elizabeth Lewis, who married 12 years earlier, may have despaired of ever having children of their own. So the youngsters might have been a welcome addition to their household.
Steve Thomas

TOP TIP

There are usually no records of unofficial adoptions, but some London Board of Guardian records, including minutes, may mention adoptions and are on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). However, many are not indexed so will need to be browsed.

How do I find birth or death records from the 1500s?

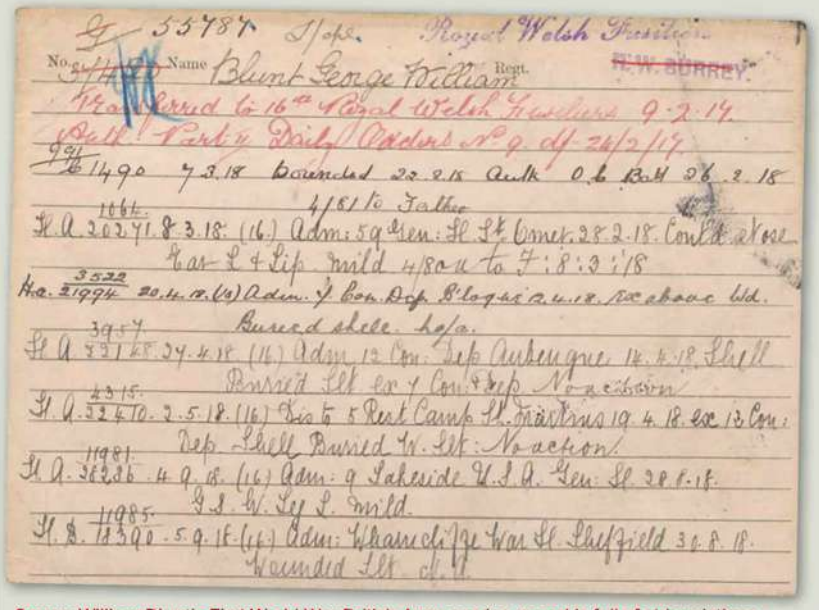
Q My ancestor, Welston (Wolston) Stonard (Stanard), was born in about 1556. He married Annys Giffin in 1581 in Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex. I have been unable to find any birth or death records for Welston or Annys. Can you help?
Julie Wilkinson

A Well done for tracing this far back to Welston Stonard, who married on 2 October 1581 at Stansted Mountfitchet. Births and deaths were seldom recorded before the start of civil registration in July 1837, so you will have traced back to the 1500s using baptisms and burials in parish registers. These were introduced by my ancestor Thomas Cromwell in 1538, but many of the early ones were made of paper (as opposed to vellum, which was used later), so do not survive.

My copy of *The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers* shows that Stansted Mountfitchet's start in 1558, so if this couple were born there before 1558, baptism records will not survive. These registers are indexed on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), which shows two early baptisms for James son of G(r)iffyn on 14 February 1560 and George son of John Gyffyn on 14 June 1560. Annys (which we would now write 'Agnes') may have been a sister of one of the boys.

There don't seem to be any Stonards or variants in the early baptisms, but you could check the marriages and burials for possible relatives. Otherwise, I note a Joane Stonard baptised on 14 October 1568 at Little Dunmow, nine miles away (no parents listed, which is fairly normal at that stage) and Robert baptised on 8 October 1552, son of Robert Stonard in White Roding, seven miles away, suggesting two possible ancestral families for Welston for you to explore. The best sources for genealogical information going back before parish registers are wills and manorial records. You could make a start using the indexes to wills proved at Chelmsford, 1400–1858, within **bit.ly/fmp-wills**, and the Manorial Documents Register on The National Archives' catalogue (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/manor-search**).
Anthony Adolph

Can you help me decipher this British Army service record?



George William Blunt's First World War British Army service record is full of abbreviations

Q I'm hoping your experts may be able to help decipher the First World War British Army service record of my husband's grandfather, George William Blunt, in particular the abbreviations on pages 34 and 35. We've had a go, but there are some things we either don't understand or have queries about. **Teresa Blunt**

TERESA BLUNT emailed us for help understanding a service record from the First World War

A This is a fascinating document! It survives in full because George voluntarily returned to the Army Reserve in 1922, having been originally discharged in early 1920. Because of his later service, both his original First World War record and his later one were combined and held separately from the bulk of First World War service records, many of which were destroyed in the Second World War during the Blitz.

He was given a new seven-figure Army Number (4184358). Thousands of men re-enlisted, especially for short periods (and for large bonuses) while the Regular Army was reforming postwar. If they served after 1921, and many did, there's a good chance that their old service record may survive too. Having a seven-digit Army Number, as well as an earlier regimental number, might be a clue. The National Archives (TNA) has a necessarily complicated guide to obtaining such records at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-soldiers-in-service-after-1918/**. Proof of death will be required.

George had three operations on his left leg, all to remove shrapnel

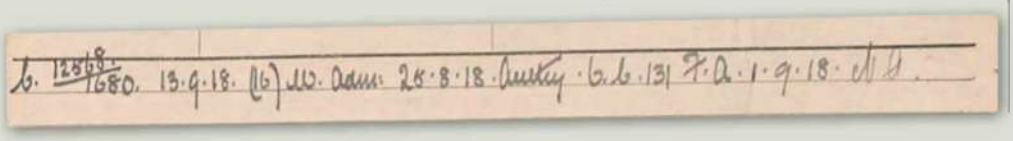
This section relates to George's injury and hospitalisation on 25 August 1918

George was wounded, and temporarily blinded, on 22 February 1918. The War Diary of his battalion, the 16th Royal Welsh Fusiliers (RWF), is available free from TNA's catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) under reference WO 95/2556, and says that German artillery concentrated their fire on two forward posts. These were in front of the main trench line acting as lookout positions, probably shallower than a trench but with a sandbagged parapet and vulnerable to collapse following a direct hit. No casualties are recorded on 20 February, but three men were wounded on 22 February, so the incident probably occurred then. George was given basic medical attention by the Regimental Aid Post, close to the trenches, then transferred to 131 Field Ambulance. They'd have assessed the damage then evacuated him to the 51st Casualty Clearing Station (in February 1918 at Coyecques, well behind the line, War Diary TNA reference WO 95/563/5) and then onto 59th Northern General Hospital (NGH), St Omer. There's an excellent description of the process at The Long, Long Trail (**longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/a-soldiers-life-1914-1918/the-evacuation-chain-for-wounded-and-sick-soldiers/**).

George was released from 59th NGH on 12 April 1918, going back up the chain via a Depot, 12 Convalescent Depot, a Rest Camp and another Depot, rejoining 16th RWF on 5 May.

On 25 August 1918, 16th RWF, 'C' Company leading, advanced through the shattered Mametz Wood. George was in 'C' Company, and this is where he was wounded again. He was taken by 131 Field Ambulance to 9 Lakeside USA General Hospital, and shipped to England for treatment. He had three operations on his left leg, all to remove shrapnel (scraps of metal). Each of the three operations seems to be related to the 25 August 1918 incident – shrapnel was very hard to remove. On his 1920 discharge, George said that he'd been wounded on 20 February 1917. But the doctor could find no record of it, and I can't find a pension card for him.

When George joined the D Reserve (which paid him a small wage in return for being obliged to call-up in an emergency), he provided details of his service with 16th RWF, including that he'd been post corporal (as a former General Post Office employee, this seems right) and been in charge of rations (presumably for 'C' Company). **Phil Tomaselli**



Is this man a soldier?

Q This is a photograph of one of my great aunts – possibly Alice Christina Nuttall. I have no information on the gentleman with her. Was he a soldier and, if so, what regiment did he serve in?
Karen Crowley

A This is a young couple, possibly brother and sister, more likely sweethearts, taken in Cottenham, Cambridgeshire, a few years before or after 1900. They're probably local. Even blowing the image up I can't see a ring on her finger, but one may be hidden in the shadows. It's clear, though, that they've made an effort to look good. He is a soldier in the Royal Horse Artillery with some military service behind him.

If you have Cambridgeshire ancestors, you might find some names you can explore. The soldier is likely to be in his early 20s and perfectly capable of having served in the First World War, so if you have a name, you can look for a Medal Index Card or service record by searching the military sections of Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). Artillerymen are specialists with a lot of training, so he'd have gone back into the artillery, I'm sure.

Given the date range, it's conceivable that he served in the Second Boer War (1899–1902) and his medal(s) hadn't yet been issued, so a search of Ancestry's collection 'UK, Military Campaign Medal and Award Rolls, 1793–1949' using name, 'Boer War' and 'Royal Horse Artillery' might produce a result.

You could also try looking for marriages in the Cottenham area five years either side of 1900.
Phil Tomaselli

1 WOMAN'S ATTIRE

The lady wears a simple loose blouse with a pie-crust collar suggesting that she's not wealthy, but she has a 'pompadour' hairstyle fashionable in the late Victorian/Edwardian period. She's probably in her 'best', indicating a special occasion.

2 TUNIC FASTENING

The frogging fastening across her companion's tunic, together with the loops at the shoulder, indicate that he's in the Royal Horse Artillery.

3 UNIFORM COLOURS

Although colours are difficult to differentiate in black and white, we can tell that the collar is darker than the tunic. The tunic is blue and the darker collar is red, as are the cuffs, marking him as an artilleryman.

4 CUFF BADGE

The crossed cannon on his cuff indicates that he's a prizewinning gunner, and the crown above dates the photo to between 1892 and 1902.

5 PHOTOGRAPHER

Cottenham was a small place and appears to have only had one photographer, suggesting that the couple are local. Cambridge, which had several, is close by.

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The Life Of A Farmer

Rosemary Collins meets the organiser of a project that transcribed a diary from 19th-century Sussex

Nicholas Oxley was a farmer who lived in the village of Warbleton, Sussex, from 1794 to 1833. Although he died nearly 200 years ago, he lives on in the diaries he kept covering 1814–1817 and 1821–1823, which still belong to his 5x great grandson Paul Oxley. In 2020, Paul loaned the diaries to the Sussex Family History Group (SFHG; **sfhg.uk**), who began a project to transcribe them. Between summer 2020 and spring 2021 Mick Henry, the group's chair, and volunteer Madeline Cole transcribed the 350 pages of the diaries, with help from members of the society's Facebook Group.

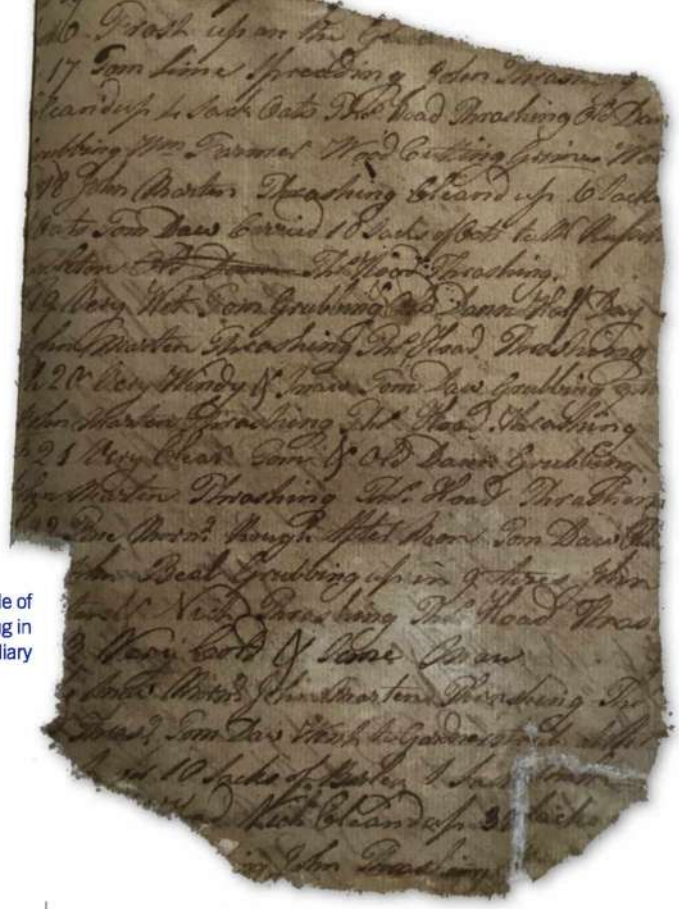
"When we had sections of text that we couldn't understand or couldn't read I posted them online," Mick says. "I think that's probably why we've got such a good transcript of the diary, because I had 3,000 members of our Facebook Group looking at what Nicholas had written, pondering over it and giving their opinions. It was a wonderful, wonderful process, and when we finished the diary some of the Group's members were really quite sad that they weren't going to meet Nicholas on a daily basis any more."

The diaries are a fascinating record of life in the county in the early 19th century.

"It's a really important manuscript about Georgian farming," Mick adds. "There's a lot out there about Victorian farming, but not a lot about Georgian farming. Nicholas was still very much tied to the horses, to the cattle, to the old ways."

Nicholas also wrote in detail about his religion as a nonconformist. "He went to the Heathfield Chapel. Every Sunday he managed to record in his diary what was read out, certainly in 1816. He would tell you who was there and who wasn't there, as far as his own immediate family goes. He would also record the page number of the hymn book. He was a very religious man."

Current events are also mentioned in Nicholas' diary. The entry from 26 June 1814 states that "the Emperor of Russia & his daughter, & King of Prussia & General Blucher past through Gardner Street on their route to Dover & embark for France". These important personages were travelling to the Congress of Vienna to agree the new layout of Europe following the defeat of Napoleon.



An example of the handwriting in Nicholas' diary

Nicholas notes that the seasons seem backward, and things aren't growing

In 1816, Nicholas records a catastrophic downturn in the weather. "He notes all the way through that the seasons seem backward, and things aren't growing." The farmer had no idea that this was the 'Year Without a Summer', caused by an eruption of the volcano Mount Tambora in present-day Indonesia that ejected huge amounts of dust into the atmosphere, lowering temperatures worldwide.

The Sussex Record Society (**sussexrecordsociety.org**) has now published the diaries in association with the SFHG. The book's front cover includes a photo of a hop-picking token, which Paul also inherited. These were given to the Oxley farm hop-pickers to exchange for money when the harvest was finished.

"The hop business was worth huge, huge money to them," Mick says. "There was a lot of dealing done locally and in London. Warbleton is on the border between Sussex and Kent, and hop-picking was prevalent in both counties."

Get Involved

Sussex Family History Group
w **sfhg.uk/resources/historic/nicholas-oxley-diaries**

The diaries have been published as the Sussex Record Society's 104th volume, which can be purchased via **sussexrecordsociety.org/shop/vol-104-the-oxley-farm-diaries/** (£30 plus P&P for members of either society, otherwise £45). The SFHG hope to publish the family trees of all of the people mentioned in the diaries on its website, so if you are related to any of them please email *oxleydiaries@sfhg.uk*.

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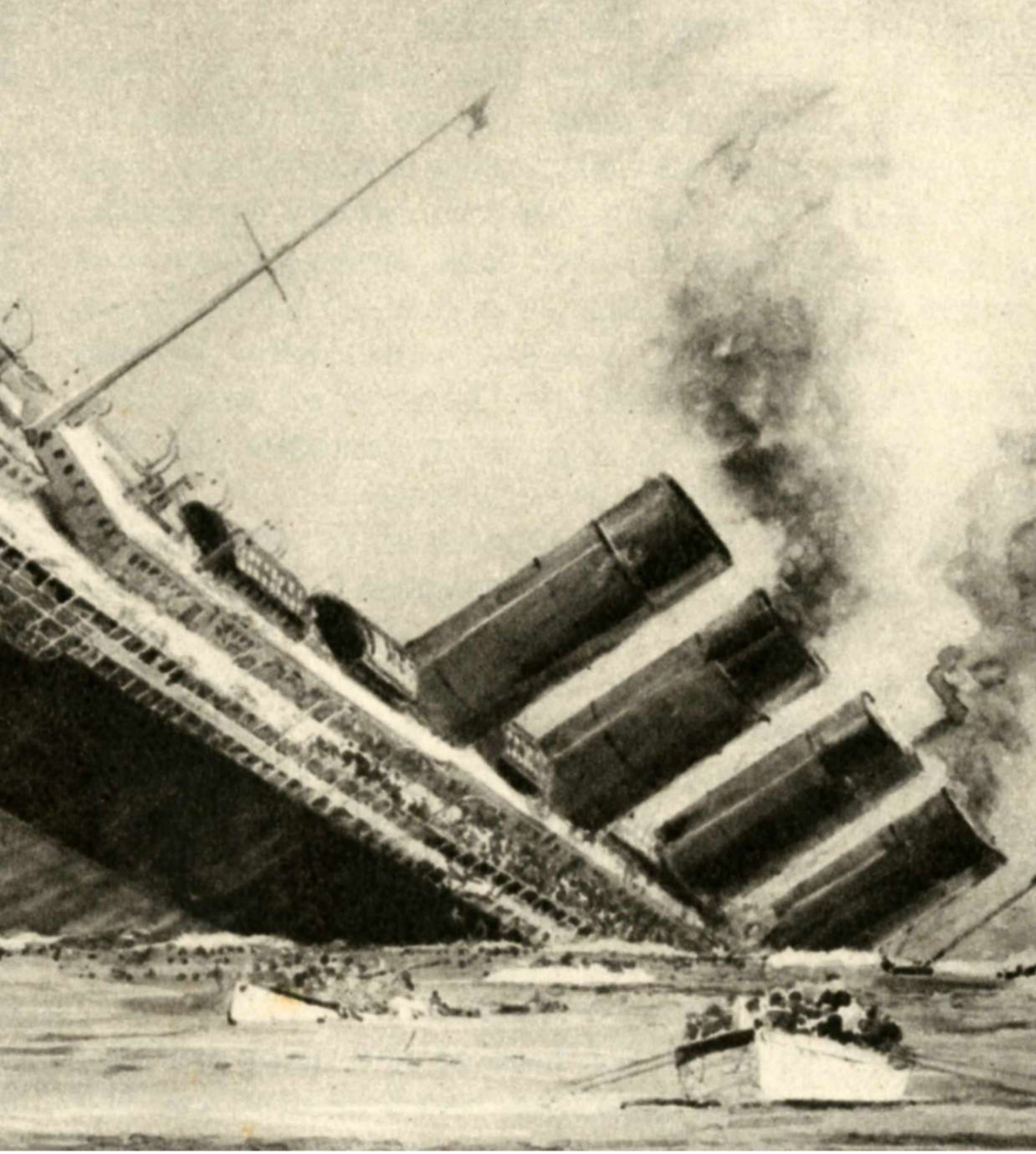
A Tragedy That Helped Turn The Tide

RMS *Lusitania* sinks 11 miles off the Old Head of Kinsale, Ireland, 7 May 1915

It would be easy to get confused, at a quick glance. But although it sports the same number of funnels, the sinking transatlantic liner depicted here isn't RMS *Titanic* but RMS *Lusitania*, it's 1915 rather than 1912, and this particular tragedy was far from an accident.

Commissioned by the Cunard Line, *Lusitania* was built by Scottish shipbuilders John Brown and Company of Clydebank, West Dunbartonshire, and on 7 September 1907 set out on its maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York, via Queenstown (now Cobb) in County Cork. The ship measured 787 feet long, weighed 31,550 tonnes, had 850 crew, and could carry some 2,200 passengers.

Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, although US president Woodrow Wilson stated that his country would remain "impartial in thought as well as in action" in line with the opinion of most Americans. Despite the conflict, and Germany warning on 4 February 1915 that the seas around the



GETTY IMAGES

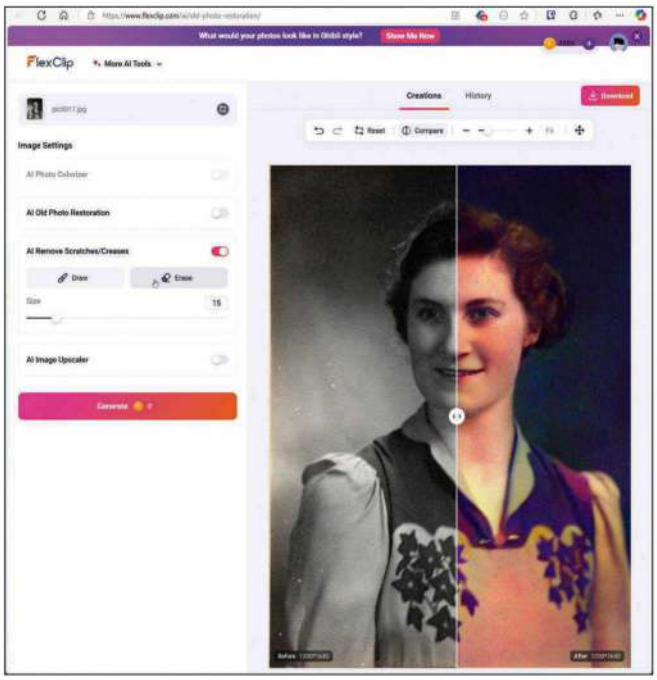
British Isles would be treated as a war zone in which any ship – civilian or military – could be attacked, the liner continued its voyages.

Lusitania left New York on its 202nd transatlantic crossing on 1 May the same year. Six days later it was approaching the south coast of Ireland when Walther Schwieger, commander of the U-boat *U-20* submerged nearby, ordered the firing of a torpedo that hit the ship's starboard bow. Soon afterwards *Lusitania* suffered a second explosion, whose cause remains unconfirmed, and the liner went under within a mere 18 minutes – in comparison, *Titanic* took two hours 40 minutes to sink. There were some 1,960 passengers and crew on *Lusitania*, and 1,198 lost their lives – of whom 128 were US citizens. And the dead included 94 children.

Inevitably, newspapers published countless articles about what one memorably referred to as "the great German murder on the high seas", including survivors' eyewitness accounts and obituaries of the victims.

What's more, the resulting outrage and anti-German sentiment were so powerful that they helped to shift opinion in the USA, which officially entered the war on 6 April 1917.

You can find out more information, and view passenger and crew lists, at the website The Lusitania Resource (**rmslusitania.info**).



Improve your old photos with AI's help

Nick Peers explains how to use a free trial of online tools to fix problems in family photos

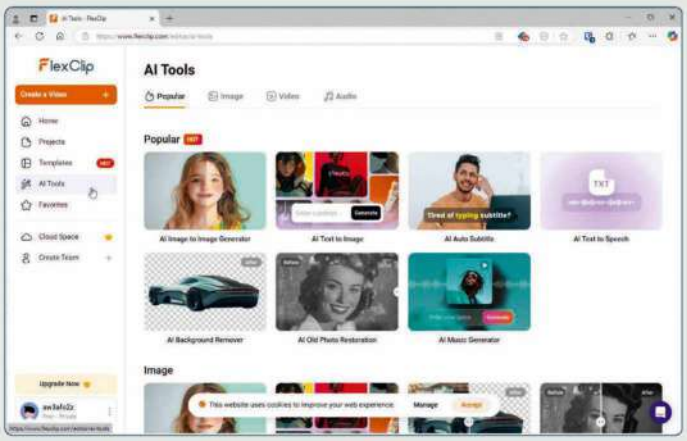
We've seen over the years how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to repair, colourise and transform old photos. FlexClip (**flexclip.com**) is a relatively new website that offers a range of image, sound and video tools through a single online portal. But while it's primarily a site for creating videos and slideshows, FlexClip also includes a series of tools – many powered by AI – that family historians will find extremely useful.

This includes an Old Photo Restoration tool, designed to take your aged pictures and improve them with a single click. There are also tools for colourising, upscaling and removing scratches and creases, plus one for improving any scratchy and hissy old audio recordings too. You can apply up to four AI tools simultaneously with FlexClip, but sometimes it's better to run them consecutively. While none of the tools is free, you can try them out on a limited number of photos before deciding if the price is worth it.

Our step-by-step guide reveals how to sign up for a free account and see what FlexClip might be able to do for your photographs. Once the trial period is up, you have a choice between a monthly subscription (from $19.99, reduced to $11.99 at time of writing) or pay-as-you-go credits (from $9.99 for 300 credits). Note that credits usually offer the best value if you're solely interested in using FlexClip's AI tools.

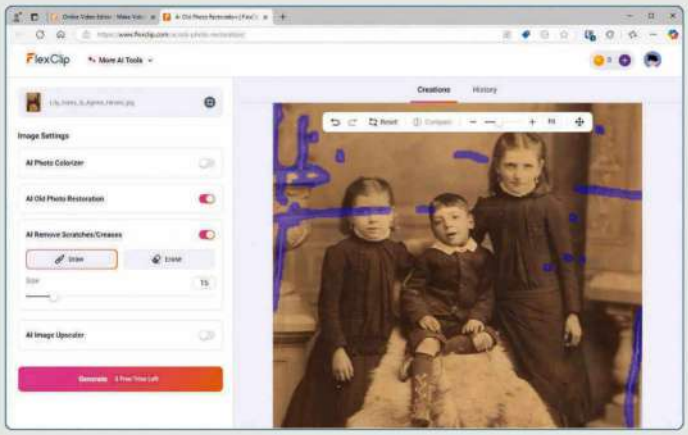
TOP TIP!

The AI-powered Old Photo Restoration tool can be hit and miss, and has no configurable settings. If certain photos disappoint, try **photorestore.io** instead.

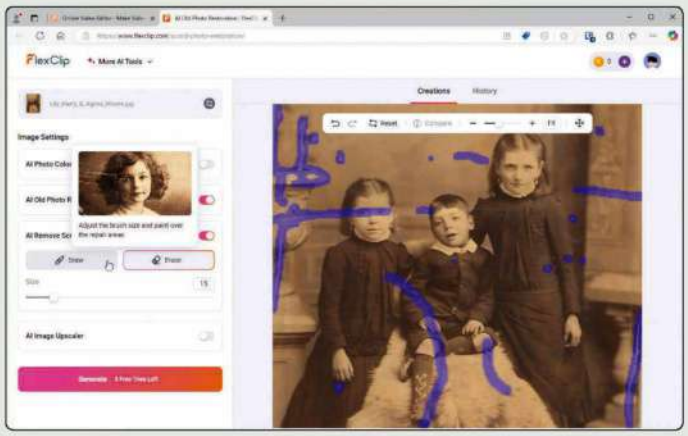


1 Create An Account Start by visiting **flexclip.com** and clicking the orange 'Sign Up' button in the top-right-hand corner to create a free account using Google, Facebook or your email address. After signing up, you should find yourself at your main page. Click 'AI Tools' in the left-hand pane.

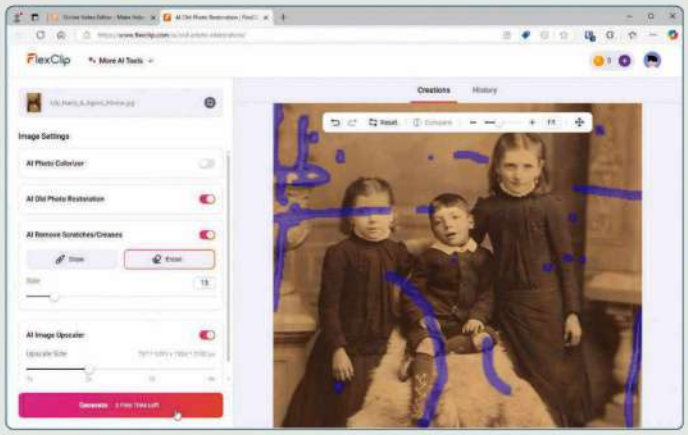
2 Launch The Photo Restoration Tool You'll see a list of available AI tools – click 'AI Old Photo Restoration'. Start by clicking 'Upload Image' to select the photograph you wish to improve. Once it's uploaded, use the slider on the right to frame the photo better in the window.



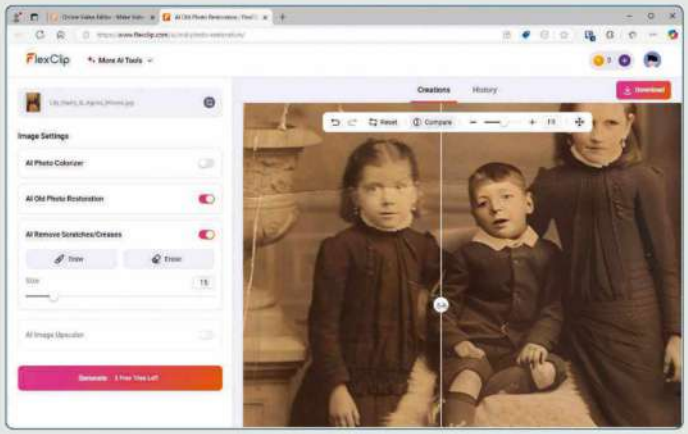
3 Choose Your Fix(es) 'AI Old Photo Restoration' is selected by default. This is a simple on/off switch, but you can try other tools or even combine them. For example, flick 'AI Remove Scratches/Creases' on and it'll scan the image for potential problems to remove, then mark them in blue.



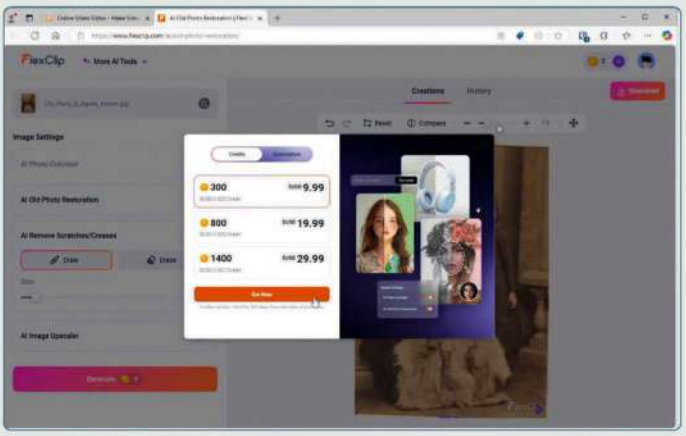
4 Manually Adjust Blemishes The Remove Scratches/Creases tool won't catch all the problems on the page, but you can manually mark areas for it to scan using the Draw tool – set the slider to alter its size, then click on a spot or click-and-drag across a blemish. Use the Erase tool if you accidentally select the wrong area.



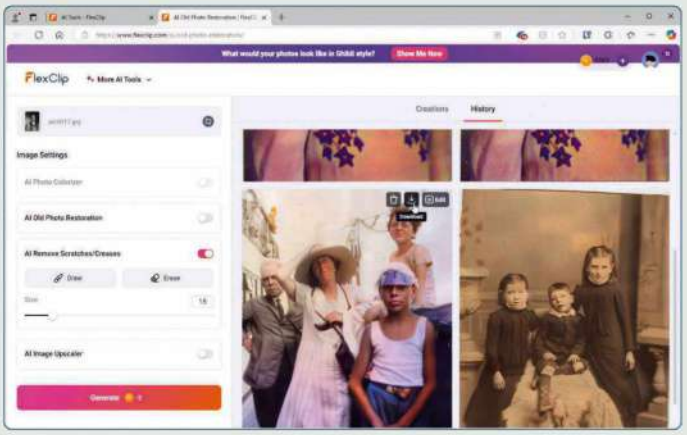
5 Upscale The Image Flick the 'AI Image Upscaler' switch to on, and you'll see a slider that allows you to increase the image size by up to four times using AI – it's similar to Upscayl from the November 2024 issue (albeit less configurable). Once you've selected and configured your choice of tools, click the 'Generate' button.



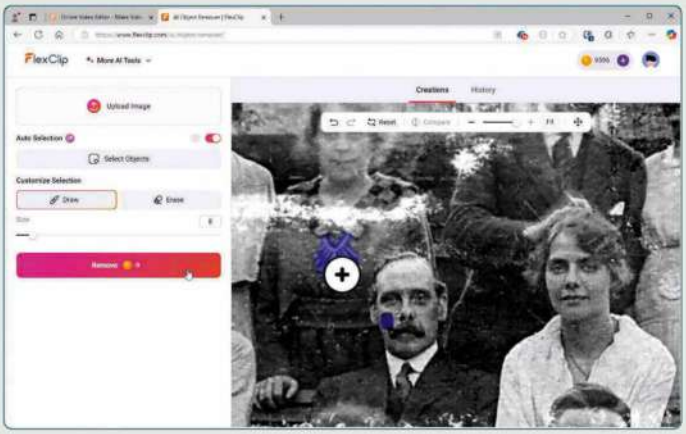
6 Review The Results Wait while the AI tools perform their magic. Once complete, the results will be shown on screen – use the 'Compare' button to view before and after versions of the image using a slider. From here you can perform additional corrections, reset to start again, or download your finished image.



7 Buy Credits Once the free trial is used up, you'll need to take out a subscription, or buy credits: the tools mentioned so far require two credits per use, so running four tools at once costs eight credits. You can purchase credits in batches of 300 ($9.99), 800 ($19.99) or 1,400 ($29.99), and credits last for a whole year.



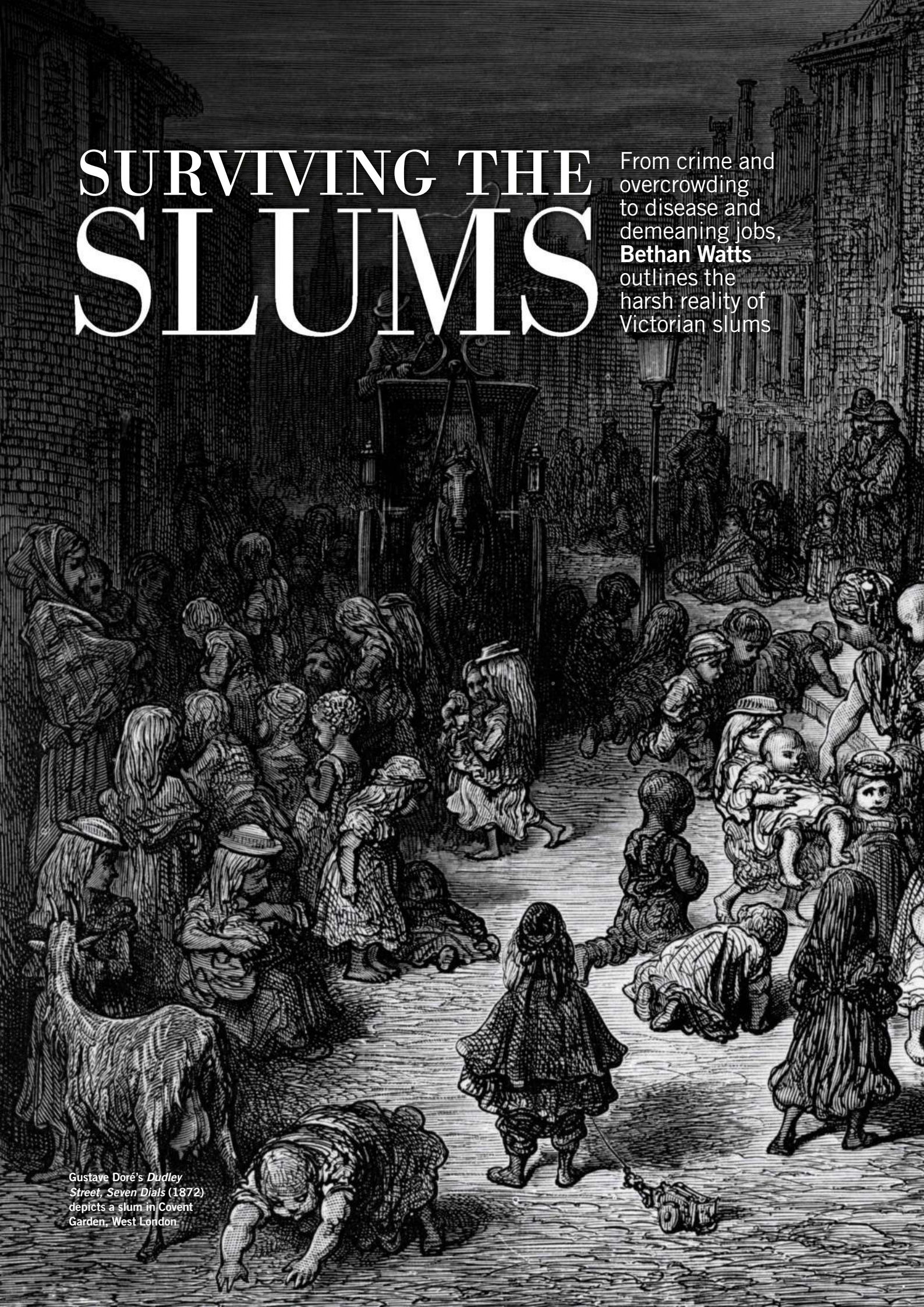
8 Revisit Previous Edits Switch to the 'History' tab at the top of the screen and you'll see a thumbnail of each image you've previously run through FlexClip. Roll your mouse over an item to reveal options to delete or download the photo, plus an 'Edit' button to perform additional tweaks using the AI tools.



9 Access More Tools Click the 'More AI Tools' shortcut at the top of the page to access other tools, like the Object Remover, which allows you to select unwanted parts of the image automatically or manually using the Draw and Erase tools. The cost varies; for example the Object Remover costs three credits per use.

SURVIVING THE SLUMS

From crime and overcrowding to disease and demeaning jobs, **Bethan Watts** outlines the harsh reality of Victorian slums



Gustave Doré's *Dudley Street, Seven Dials* (1872) depicts a slum in Covent Garden, West London

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Life in the Victorian slums was balanced on a knife-edge; one late rent payment or missed meal could have fatal results. Born against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution, urban areas swelled with opportunists seeking employment in newly built factories, mills and warehouses. Beckoned by the promise of steady labour and good pay, families uprooted their rural lives and settled into suburbia. Yet as more people crowded into towns and cities, space quickly began to run out. Unable to house their new arrivals, cities spilled over with workers who became disillusioned with the promise of wealth and prosperity; instead, they slogged through labour for little reward, and their families were beginning to suffer for it. With houses unfit for the number of inhabitants who were squeezed within their creaking walls, Victorian paupers toppled onto streets and into makeshift hovels.

Families were forced to share their homes with strangers who risked exposure on the streets. In Edinburgh in 1869, the average number of household inhabitants was 16, and it was estimated that 14,000 families had been squeezed into just 2,000 rooms, 900 of which were underground basements. Dosshouses – or tenements – could be rented for a fee of 8d a night in exchange for a bed, yet there was no certainty of a private room, or even a private bed. One dosshouse in Spitalfields in the East End of London sheltered 300 men and women, who were forced to share beds, sometimes with the opposite sex.

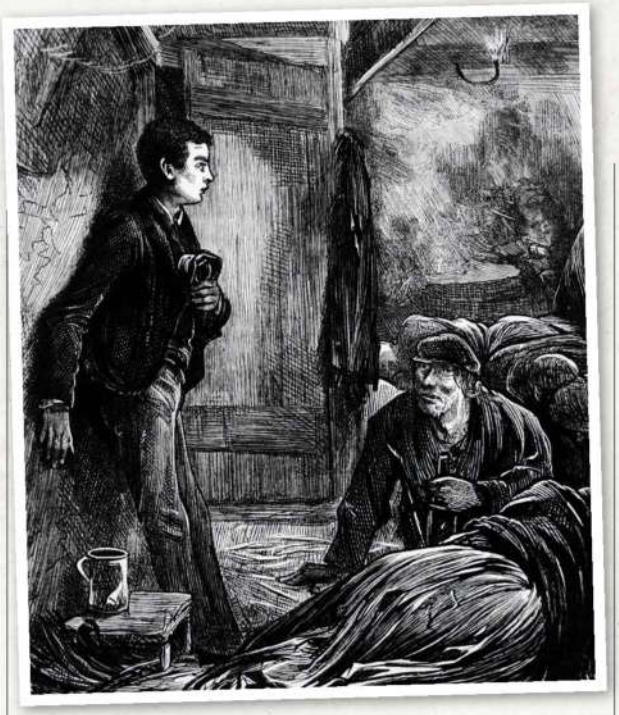
Fit For A Dog To Die In

The most deprived slums in London were in Clerkenwell in the centre, Lambeth in the south and Whitechapel in the east, which were described in 1869 as "waterless, drainless, floorless and almost roofless". One commentator called them "lairs into which a starving dog might creep to die, but nothing ▶

more". As well as lacking in privacy, slum dwellings were also without heating, running water and waste disposal. A single room would be used as a bedroom, kitchen, sickroom, bathroom, birthing chamber and even a makeshift morgue, where corpses lay in rest as mourning families continued their daily routines. "It's impossible for these people to be clean in their dwellings, clothes or persons," wrote journalist Isabella Bird in her book *Notes on Old Edinburgh* (Edmonston and Douglas, 1869, and available from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-bird-edin**), after witnessing three prostitutes forced to entertain their customers in a dirty, windowless room shared by a family with young children. In another room, six adults shared a mattress on the dirt floor.

Even food could be insanitary. In her *Book of Household Management* (SO Beeton, 1861, and available from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-beeton**), Isabella Beeton encouraged paupers to reduce food waste, even at the detriment of their health. "If flies have touched [meat]," she instructed, "the part must be cut off", but the rest still eaten. Foods favoured for their low cost included 'broxy' meat (rotten offcuts marinated to disguise putrefaction), offal and paste-like gruel.

Despite this, cookery books were written for the poor, including *A Plain Cookery Book for the Working Classes* by Queen Victoria's head chef Charles Elmé Francatelli (Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1852, and available from Project Gutenberg at **gutenberg.org/ebooks/22114**).



Inside a 19th-century dosshouse

Some occupations came with the perk of accommodation and board, such as domestic service which attracted hordes of young women and girls. Maids earned around £1 per week, a decent wage but still grossly underpaid. Costermongers and travelling salespeople could expect to make the same, their professions laborious but respectable. Children were forced into employment to support their families, crawling between machinery as 'scavengers' gathering waste material, or climbing chimneys as sweeps.

Death Of A Child Sweep

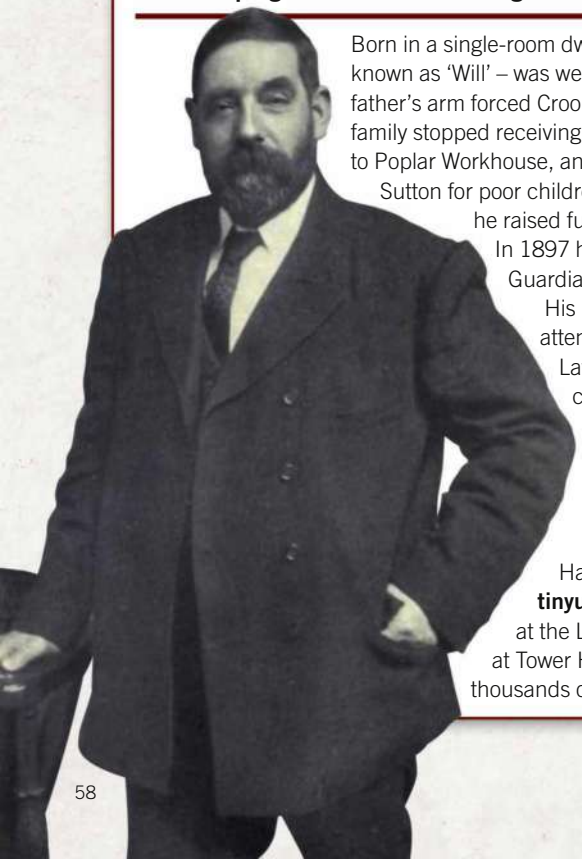
The death of 11-year-old sweep George Brewster in 1875, following the 1842 report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Children's Employment, forced Parliament to overhaul child labour. Spearheaded by the likes of Dickens, numerous laws were passed that limited the employment of children, including the 1847 Ten Hours Act and the 1874 Factory Act, which together legislated a maximum number of hours that children, young people and women could work.

Adults too worked dangerous jobs for a pittance. The workhouse was a last resort, a hellish place considered worse than life on the streets. Thomas Wright's *The Great Army of London Poor* (T Woolmer, 1882, online at The Dictionary of Victorian London: **victorianlondon.org/publications6/greatarmy.htm**) reports one man saying, "None by God and ourselves know how hard [we] lived to keep out of it." Instead, paupers turned to unsanitary jobs such as bone-grubbing, mudlarking and sewer-flushing, which found workers knee-deep in human and animal waste in search of items to sell.

Another dehumanising job forced upon paupers – especially women – was prostitution. Making just 3d per customer (the equivalent of a small loaf), sex workers faced discrimination, abuse and a myriad of diseases. One told journalist Henry Mayhew in 1850 that she "could not get out of that life… you

William 'Will' Crooks 1852–1921

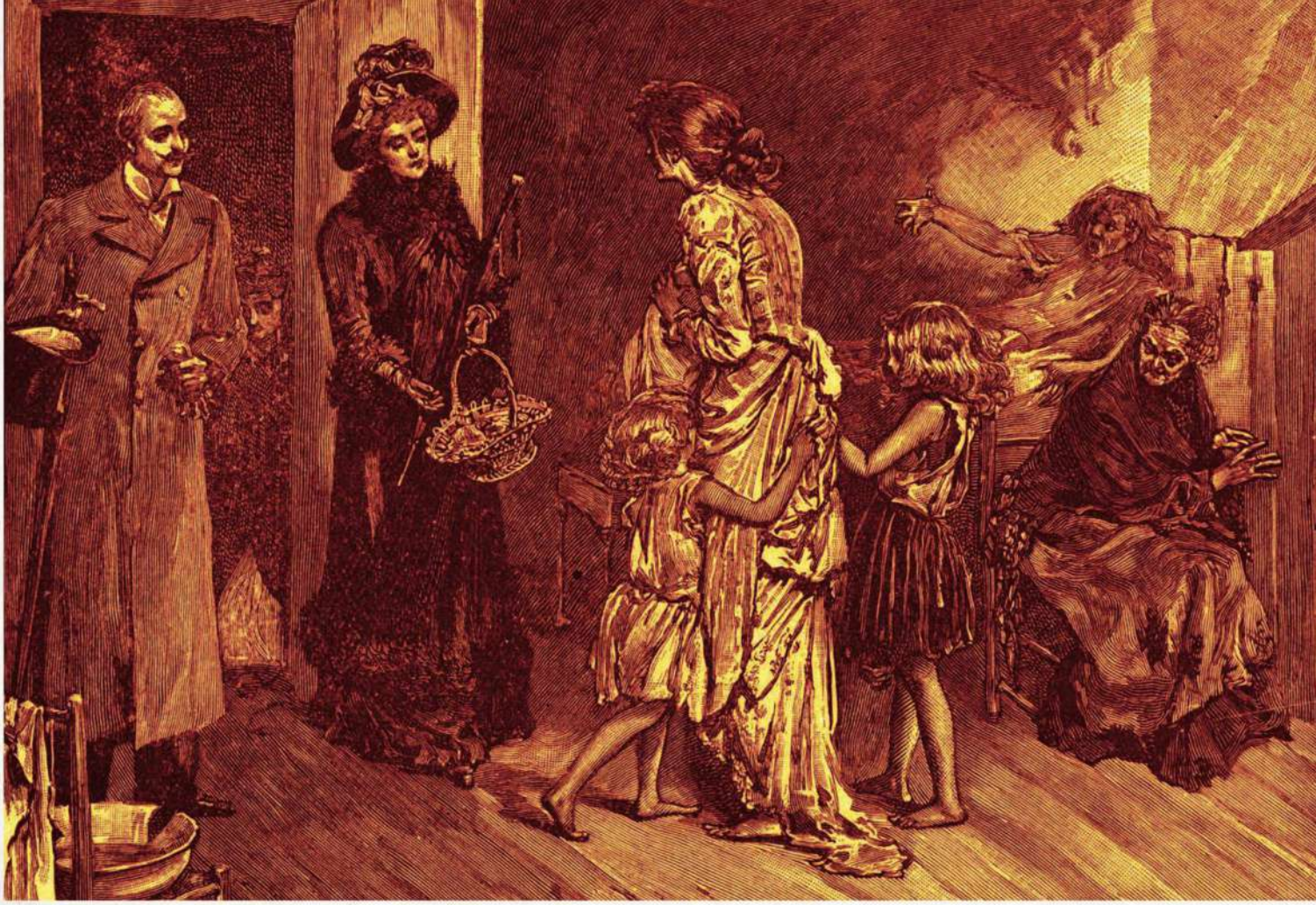
This campaigner and MP never forgot his humble roots



Born in a single-room dwelling in Poplar, East London, William Crooks – known as 'Will' – was well acquainted with poverty. The amputation of his father's arm forced Crooks to become a milkman aged eight, but when the family stopped receiving poor relief in 1861, he and his siblings were sent to Poplar Workhouse, and then to the South Metropolitan District School in Sutton for poor children. In 1889 Crooks was working on the docks when he raised funds for and co-led a strike to secure fairer wages. In 1897 he became the chairman of the Poplar Board of Guardians, providing insight into workhouse operations. His 1906 inquiry into Poplar Workhouse brought attention to its squalid conditions, spurring the Poor Law Commission into action. Crooks continued to campaign for social reform, advocating for work unions, old-age pensions, and improved provisions for schoolchildren and the mentally unwell. He became the first Labour mayor of Poplar in 1901, and MP for Woolwich in 1903.

The online version of the Parliamentary archive Hansard has transcripts of Crooks' contributions (see **tinyurl.com/hansard-crooks**). He died on 5 June 1921 at the London Hospital, Whitechapel, and was buried at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, his funeral attracting thousands of working-class mourners.

GETTY IMAGES | *FROM WORKHOUSE TO WESTMINSTER: THE LIFE STORY OF WILL CROOKS, MP* BY GEORGE HAW (CASSELL AND COMPANY, 1907)



Slum tourism is nothing new – even then 'slummers' would visit the poor to bestow food and small gifts

get used in there, and you are life-ruined". Mayhew's exposé *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851–1862) illuminated the horrendous employment conditions of countless paupers.

Driven To Crime

Crime often yielded lucrative results. From body snatching to theft, cash was exchanged beneath pub tables and in shadowy alleyways. It was estimated that between 1830 and 1860, children were responsible for half of all recorded thefts, led by conmen such as Isaac 'Ikey' Solomon, who inspired Dickens' Fagin. Gangs such as the Scuttlers of Manchester and the Peaky Blinders of Birmingham fought social injustice through illegal practices like gambling and fraud. With little to lose, criminals purposely shattered windows, defaced churches, and smashed machinery, the prospect of a bed and a meal in prison more appealing than a life on the street. Mayhew wrote of a 19 year old who had been arrested 14 times, while politician Will Crooks described labourers destroying workhouse property out of a sense of sheer injustice.

Even murder could be profitable. Amelia Dyer, 'the Ogress of Reading', was hanged in 1896 after killing 300–400 infants under the guise of fostering, exchanging their life insurance for cash. So too did Britain's first female serial killer Mary Ann Cotton, executed in 1873 and thought to have killed 15 of her children and stepchildren, three husbands, and her own mother. In 1882 alone more than 544 corpses washed up on the foreshore of the Thames, with half believed to be linked to murders motivated by fraud.

The costermonger in this photo, taken c1877, sells coke in winter and silver sand for polishing in summer

The mystery of disembodied limbs on Tottenham Court Road in 1884 and the Thames Torso Murders of 1887–1889 left cities across Britain on high alert, but it would take the murders of five women in Whitechapel in 1888 to force judicial reform. The Jack the Ripper case had reverberating effects across the country, changing the way that the police and the law responded to murder and rape, as well as how they treated crime scenes. Emphasis was placed on penalising criminals, funding penal institutions, and overhauling the judicial system as a whole.

Parliament had to face the effects of unemployment, which snaked through the Victorian slums. Canvassing the Government, reformists such as Seebohm Rowntree and Louisa Twining advocated for fairer working conditions and wages, revealing that only one-third of the working population made ▶

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Victorian prostitutes dance to drum up trade in Drury Lane, West London

enough money to survive. Beatrice Webb campaigned for pensions and sick pay, particularly for those injured in service, as did Charles Booth, who served on the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor (1893–1895), leading directly to the 1908 Old Age Pensions Act. Booth's London poverty maps project (1886–1903) had highlighted areas of destitution, with slums making up a quarter of London. During Queen Victoria's reign, Poor Law provision went from £1.25 million to £7 million, injecting much-needed cash into pauper provision across Britain.

Disease – And A Great Stink

Yet the slums continued to fester. As overcrowding reached new heights, sanitation deteriorated further. One of the biggest killers in the 19th century was disease, which was resistant to inadequate medicine and spread by poor hygiene; scarlet fever, measles and whooping cough were some of the most prolific. London's Great Stink of 1858, attributed to poor sanitation, saw quicklime and carbolic acid poured into the Thames in an attempt to quell the spread of disease, leading pioneers like Florence Nightingale to publish treatises on the importance of cleanliness in the fight against the 'miasma' that she, along with most Victorians at that time, believed carried diseases. Although Dr John Snow had published his essay *On the Mode of Communication of Cholera* in 1849, which he updated in 1855 after tracing a London outbreak to a communal water pump exposed to sewage, germ theory was not widely accepted until the 1880s. However, the overcrowding and insanitary conditions of slum living was seen to spread disease.

As the Victorian era came to its close, Britons emerged from the slums blinking in the light of progress. Education Acts in the early 1900s raised the school-leaving age to 14, helping children to escape slum life. The prospects of paupers were beginning to improve, driven by the efforts of those who called the slums home. These people had loved, had laboured and had lost, and were consigned to the margins of history. The characteristics that made them human were erased, their struggles mistaken for stagnation. Yet their stories reveal the true identities of those who lived, worked and died in the Victorian slums; that ultimately they were just like us.

BETHAN WATTS is a historian and author. Her latest book *The Dark and Dingy Underworld of the Victorian Slums* is available from Pen & Sword (RRP £25)

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

London Labour and the London Poor
Henry Mayhew
1851–1862
Investigative journalist Henry Mayhew explored the working conditions and daily routines of London's 'street folk', from stall owners and mudlarks, to pedlars and prostitutes. He collated his findings in a four-volume 'cyclopaedia', which is freely available from Project Gutenberg at **tinyurl.com/guten-mayhew**.

Tracing Your Pauper Ancestors
Robert Burlison
Pen & Sword, 2009
Burlison tackles the shadowy and oft-hidden lives of Victorian paupers in this handy guide, identifying useful resources.

WEBSITES

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
Millions of 19th-century newspapers have been digitised in this online archive. Search by date or location to reveal crime reports, local news and other fascinating articles about both the richest and poorest echelons of society.

CHARLES BOOTH'S POVERTY MAPS
w **booth.lse.ac.uk/map**
View the reformist's original notes (made 1886–1903) on the slums of London in these maps, charting the city's neighbourhoods and the levels of poverty he observed.

VOICES OF THE VICTORIAN POOR
w **www.victorianpoor.org**
Here you can search an online database of more than 3,500 letters written by, and about, British paupers from 1834–1900. You can also find petitions to the Poor Law Commission, union minutes and workhouse records, which can be accessed via an interactive map of the UK.

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MERCHANDISE

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- Irish schools
- Herefordshire kin

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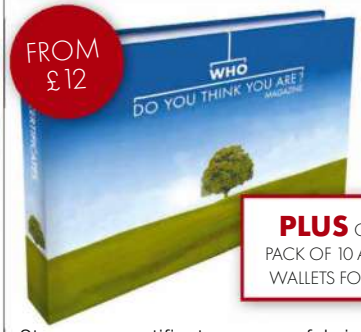

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'Sonnets Revealed Stephan's Saviour'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

The discovery of a collection of poems revealed to Dr Ann M Altman how her father escaped Nazi persecution in the run-up to the Second World War. She explained her story to **Gail Dixon**

Stephan Körner, my father, was born in 1913 in Ostrava. At that time the city was in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It later became part of Czechoslovakia, and is now in north-east Czechia.

After serving in the cavalry, Stephan received his law degree from Charles University in Prague. His family, Jewish by descent, didn't practice Judaism but Stephan added Hebrew to his studies of Latin and Greek.

In March 1939, soon after he had begun to practise law in his home town, it was occupied by the Nazis and life changed forever. An old schoolmate, who had thrown his lot in with the invaders, came to the Körners' home in full Nazi uniform and warned, "If you don't leave today, you won't be able to leave tomorrow." My grandparents Emil and Erna Körner reacted by saying, "We aren't communists or criminals; we aren't religious Jews. Why should we worry?"

DR ANN M ALTMAN is a retired scientist who lives in Hamden, Connecticut, USA. She has been researching her family history for several years

Stephan as a baby in 1913 with his mother Erna

Stephan, by contrast, took the warning seriously and made plans to leave immediately with his close friend and neighbour Otto Eisner. Otto's mother was able to find a driver to take Stephan and Otto, with only their briefcases, to the Polish border which they crossed on foot.

The two young men joined thousands of Jewish and political refugees in Katowice, a city in southern Poland, where there was a British consulate.

Soon Otto's wife Hella Guth also arrived, as did their friends Willi Haas and Ernst Kaiser.

My Brick Wall

Growing up, all I knew of Stephan's story was that in 1939 he had managed to sail from Poland to Sweden and from there to England. Stephan was able to study for a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Cambridge and served in the Czechoslovak Army, fighting the Germans in France.

In 1944, he married my mother Edith Laner, who was another Czech refugee of Jewish descent. After the war, Stephan became a lecturer and eventually chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bristol, where he later became pro vice-chancellor.

My mother's distinguished career culminated in her election as chief magistrate of the City of Bristol and designation, by Elizabeth II, as Commander of the British Empire (CBE) for services to the National Health Service.

Stephan was a cavalry officer in the 2nd Siberian Hussars before going to university

My parents died in 2000 and, at that point, I knew none of the details of Stephan's escape.

My Eureka Moment

Otto also settled in England, and stayed in touch with our family. He and Hella had separated and, when I was a child, I met his new wife and their two children. In the 2010s, his son John contacted me via Facebook, renewing our families' friendship.

In 2015, John and I returned to our roots in Ostrava, and he began tracing his own family history. In 2017, he found a niece of Hella's in England who was happy to help our research.

Hella's niece had inherited a vast cache of material from her aunt, which included handwritten poems and pen-and-ink sketches from the months that Hella had spent in Katowice.

She shared the material with John and me, but we couldn't understand the poems because they were written in German. We were, by contrast, able to appreciate a wonderful sketch

DAMIAN HICKEY

A Memorial To Holocaust Victims

These *Stolpersteine* (literally 'stumbling stones' – memorial cobblestones) have been placed outside the former home of Ann's grandparents in Ostrava, Czechia

1 "Here lived Erna Körnerová, née Maierová, born 1893, deported 1941 to Minsk, murdered 16.11.1941"

2 This inscription reads, "Here lived Emil Körner, born 1884, deported 1939 to Nisko, and never heard of again"

Reader Tips

Ann has this advice for other researchers with Jewish roots

- The website of the Arolsen Archives in Germany, the International Center on Nazi Persecution, has a huge database: **arolsen-archives.org/en/**. It's where I found details of my grandparents' deaths.
- Reach out to other families who might have information about your own family history.
- The archive of the Center for Jewish History (**cjh.org**) in New York includes family papers.

of my father and a drawing of a four-leafed clover, decorated with the signatures of Stephan, Otto, Hella and Ernst.

In 2018, John had the poems translated into English. Written collaboratively by the four friends, they were light-hearted sonnets and verses expressing a longing for freedom. Scanning the translations, I noticed the words "Holingsworth [sic], you Goddess of Transports", which proved the key to Stephan's survival.

My Breakthrough

Online research revealed that Clare Hollingworth was a young British journalist, who arrived in Katowice in March 1939. She started working for the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia, taking charge of the maintenance and evacuation of thousands of people. To cope with the sheer numbers, she began issuing group visas countersigned by the British consul general.

By July 1939, Clare had processed more than 2,000 visas, including those of Stephan, Otto, Ernst, Hella and Willi.

The British government, calling these visas "entirely irregular", ended Clare's work in July 1939. She returned to journalism, and achieved the scoop of the century when she reported the Nazi invasion of Poland.

I was stunned to learn that Stephan's escape to England had depended on Clare's "entirely irregular" actions.

She died in Hong Kong, China, aged 105, after an extraordinary career as an intrepid journalist.

My grandparents Emil and Erna remained in Ostrava, and both perished during the Holocaust. Erna was murdered in Minsk (now in Belarus), and Emil was transported to Nisko in Poland and never returned.

My children, my grandchildren and I owe our lives to Clare. May her memory be a blessing.

HAVE YOU BROKEN THROUGH A BRICK WALL?

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

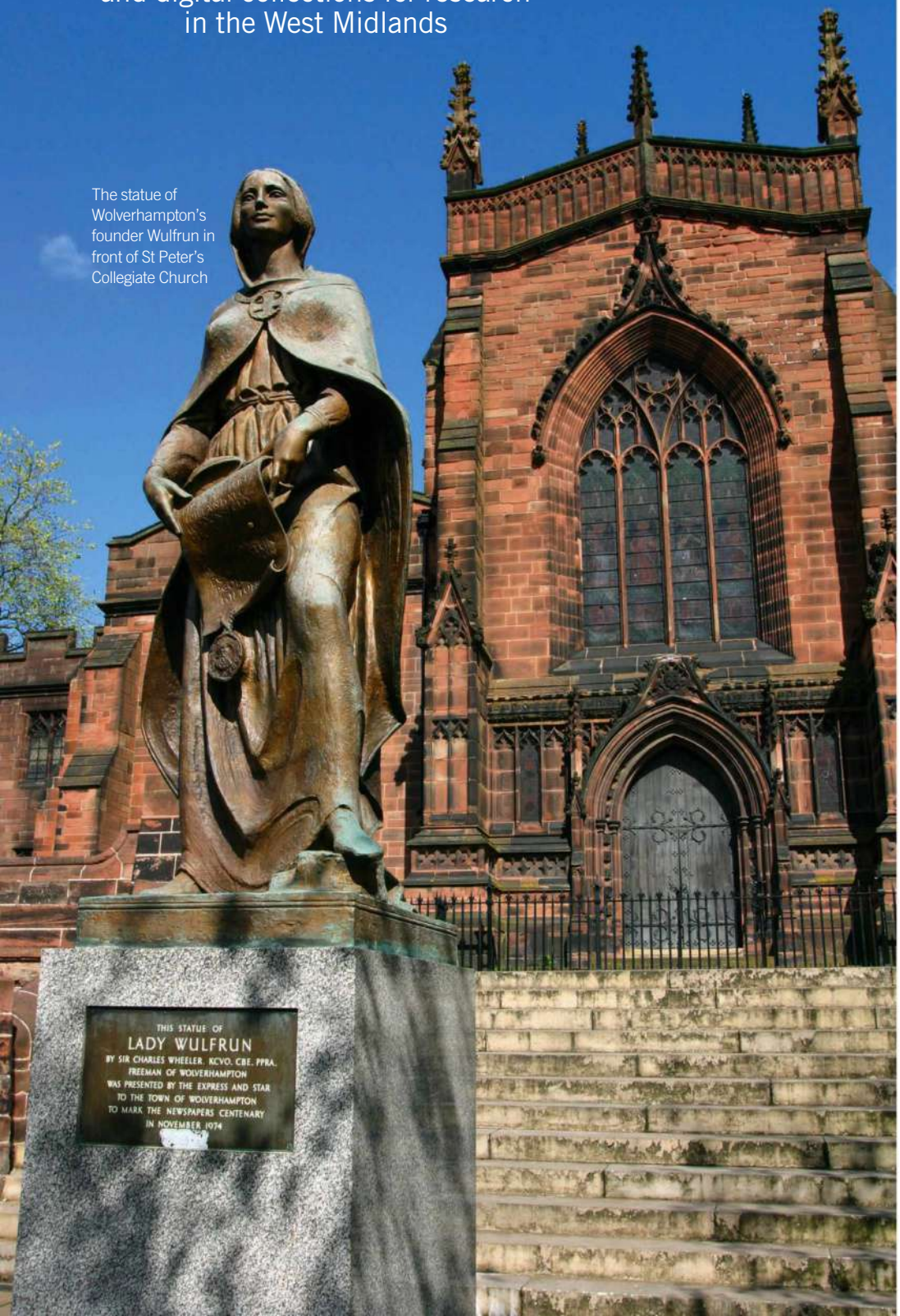
This photograph of Stephan with two students dates from the 1970s

Stephan with his granddaughter Leah and biologist son-in-law Sidney Altman in 1990

Around Britain

West Midlands

Jonathan Scott finds new facilities and digital collections for research in the West Midlands



The statue of Wolverhampton's founder Wulfrun in front of St Peter's Collegiate Church

The West Midlands is a modern ceremonial county encompassing parts of historic Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, including major cities such as Birmingham and Coventry, as well as the more loosely defined 'Black Country', which comprises Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

At first glance this can seem a complicated region in which to conduct your research into your tree. If your family hailed from Dudley, for example, there are a number of places where you might find relevant records.

There's Dudley's own archives of course, but local material may also have ended up in the neighbouring archives for Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. In addition, Dudley was traditionally in Worcestershire, and yet some parts of what is now the Borough of Dudley – namely Sedgley, Coseley, Brierley Hill and Kingswinford – were originally within historic Staffordshire. As a result both Staffordshire and Worcestershire county record offices may hold collections that will be useful for your research.

Newly Digitised Records

Thankfully, since our last visit to the area in 2021, an enormous number of important resources have come online. Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) now has partnerships with archives for Warwickshire, Birmingham, Staffordshire and Worcestershire. This means that a generous proportion of Church of England parish registers from across the region are readily available to remote researchers.

Changes on the ground include a new £8.7 million history centre for Staffordshire (**https://www.staffordshirehistory.org.uk**) that opened its doors in November last year. Indeed as we went to press staff had just welcomed their 5,000th visitor since reopening. Jo Terry, head of Staffordshire Archives and Heritage, says, "We're all very pleased with the way things are going at the new centre. Feedback from visitors,

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Free Online Records

Name indexes, directories, databases, and civil records of birth, marriage and death

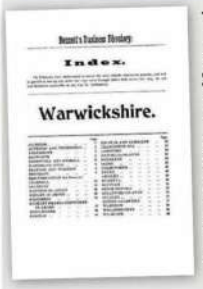
Birth, Marriage And Death Records

w **westmidlandsbmd.org.uk**

Search more than 2.7 million indexed birth, marriage and death records from the register offices of Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall.

Directories

w **bit.ly/uni-leic-special**



The University of Leicester's website Special Collections Online includes street and trade directories for Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, plus some city titles.

Staffordshire Indexes

w **staffsnameindexes.org.uk**

This site provides a number of indexes to Staffordshire sources. Recent additions include Stoke-on-Trent police and special-constables indexes.

Warwickshire Databases

w **tinyurl.com/warwick-data**

This collection of finding aids includes a database of licensed victuallers in Warwickshire (1801–1828), and a tithe-apportionments database (1838–1853).

Worcestershire Indexes

w **tinyurl.com/worcs-ind**

This site's indexes include Absent Voters' Lists (1918–1919), marriage licences (1853–1916), a militia list (1824–1831), wills and quarter-sessions records.

researchers and local groups has been incredibly positive, and staff and volunteers are making the most of brand-new facilities."

You can find the Staffordshire History Centre on Eastgate Street in Stafford, and it's the result of an extension to the old Staffordshire Record Office building that incorporated and renovated the William Salt Library. This was founded by banker, genealogist and antiquary William Salt (1808–1863), and preserves his vast collection of books, manuscripts, transcriptions, pamphlets, drawings and watercolours.

A Look At The Landscape

Jo adds, "We've got an exciting programme of activities and pop-up exhibitions planned including 'Beneath Our Feet', which tells the story of the geology, geography and industrial landscapes of Staffordshire."

She says that volunteers are currently working on a number of transcription projects that will improve access to Poor Law documents, registers of workers from Ireland, and letters from the Hatherton Estate collection.

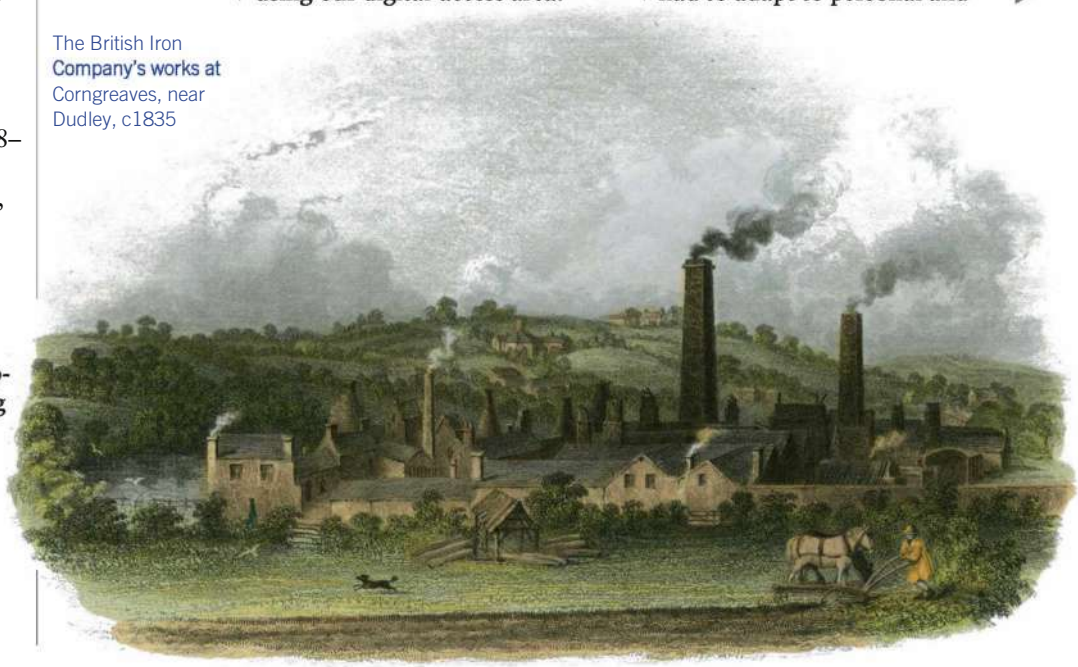
"Finally, we are busy planning more family history workshops, and our brilliant volunteers are learning how to support visitors using our digital-access area."

During the Industrial Revolution Birmingham became known as the 'City of a Thousand Trades', while Wolverhampton became a centre of metalworking and lock-making. Today Wolverhampton City Archives (**www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk/wolverhampton-city-archives/**) looks after significant collections relating to local firms, including records of the Bilston Steelworks, Joseph Sankey & Sons, John Thompson Engineering and Edwin Preston Ltd, which manufactured weights, handbells and laboratory apparatus.

The Life Of A Local Woman

Senior archivist Heidi McIntosh says that the team are currently hosting an exhibition of medical artefacts and memorabilia, which has been curated by the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust. And in June this will be followed by an exhibition tracing 20th-century history through the life of one local woman and her family.

"On 29 September 1923 the British Empire reached its maximum territorial extent. Winifred Warner was then 17, on the verge of adulthood and living at home in Wolverhampton. She lived until 1997, witnessing two world wars, the empire begin the process of dismantling and dissolution, and the establishment of the Welfare State. Winifred had to adapt to personal and ▶



The British Iron Company's works at Corngreaves, near Dudley, c1835

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economic shocks, good times and bad times, prosperity and shortages, as did the town in which she was born and lived the majority of her life.

"Throughout this time Winifred kept detailed records of her daily activities, diaries, scraps of paper, cards, shopping lists and receipts, and above all the letters she and her mother sent and received, that capture specific moments in time and place."

Oral-History Resource

Wolverhampton City Archives' collections of both 'born digital' and digitised material can be explored through Preservica (**wolvcityarc.access.preservica.com**). You can also listen to oral-history collections at Wolverhampton Voices (**www.wolverhamptonvoices.org.uk**), and explore thousands of historic images published in the long-running local newspaper the *Express & Star* at **photo-archive.expressandstar.co.uk**.

Finally, the archive is a FamilySearch Affiliate Library (**familysearch.org/en/affiliates**), so in-person visitors can access parish records from all over the world.

Birmingham in the late 19th century

If you're researching a criminal ancestor in the West Midlands, there are several places where you may be able to find traces of their misdemeanours. In the past, less serious crimes were dealt with by manorial courts or, from the 1730s onwards, the petty sessions, which eventually evolved into modern magistrates' courts. Quarter sessions, meanwhile, dealt with more serious crimes, while capital offences came before a judge at the Assizes.

WATCH OUT!

Nonconformist churches were widespread in the West Midlands, so it's well worth exploring non-Church of England registers.

Free Name Indexes

Staffordshire Archives has its own dedicated website Staffordshire Name Indexes (**www.staffsnameindexes.org.uk**) where you can search the likes of lists of prisoners (1779–1921), as well as a coroners' index (1850–1861), indictments (1581–1733) and even an index of jurors' lists (1811–1831). Worcestershire Archives has an index to prisoners, and Warwickshire's heritage and culture service manager Richard Lewis reports that a quarter-session minutes name index covering 1850–1900 has recently been added to the archive's 'Catalogues and Databases' web page, which you can find at **heritage.warwickshire.gov.uk/catalogues-databases**.

Wolverhampton's quarter-sessions records have been underused by family historians in the past, Heidi believes, but this could be about to change thanks to the arrival of new finding aids. "These records detail the crimes and some personal information of the accused, as well as whether they were convicted and what the punishment was. These are currently being indexed by the name of the accused, so they will be much easier to find." The indexes are a work in progress, but some are already available to search via Black Country History (**blackcountryhistory.org**).

LOCAL INDUSTRY

Chance Brothers Did your relation work for this major glass manufacturer?

A worker at Chance Brothers' factory in Smethwick, 1946

Chance Brothers was a glass manufacturer established in Smethwick by Robert Lucas Chance in 1824. The firm made everything from thin glass for microscopes to lenses for lighthouses, as well as glass for the Crystal Palace, built in Hyde Park in London for the 1851 Great Exhibition, and the faces of the Westminster Clock Tower containing Big Ben. Sandwell Archives has recently been awarded nearly £50,000 via the 'Archives Revealed' programme to catalogue the collection. You can view the entries so far at **www.blackcountryhistory.org/collections/getrecord/GB146_BS6/**.

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DIRECTORY

ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES

Birmingham Archives And Heritage

a **Library of Birmingham, Centenary Square, Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2ND**
t 0121 242 4242
e *enquiries@libraryofbirmingham.com*
w **birmingham.gov.uk/archives**
The Archives, Heritage and Photography section on level four has material for tracing families in the area. Rare, fragile and older printed material is accessible by appointment at the Wolfson Centre for Archival Research.

Coventry Archives

a **Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Jordan Well, Coventry CV1 5QP**
t 02476 237583
e *archives@cvlife.co.uk*
w **theherbert.org/history-centre/**
The Reading Room houses family history resources, while the Research Room is where you can consult original archival material. Both are open by appointment.

Dudley Archives And Local History Centre

a **Tipton Road, Dudley DY1 4SQ**
t 01384 812770
e *dudley.archives@gll.org*
w **better.org.uk/library/dudley/archives-and-local-history-centre**
The centre has trade directories, census returns, and electoral and parish registers from the Borough of Dudley and further afield.

Sandwell Community History And Archives Service

a **Smethwick Library, High Street, Smethwick B66 1AA**
t 0121 569 4985
e *archives_service@sandwell.gov.uk*
w **sandwell.gov.uk/archives/visit-archives-service**
The material here covers the six towns of Sandwell – Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich.

Solihull Heritage And Local Studies

a **1st Floor, Core Library, Homer Road, Solihull B91 3RG**
t 0121 704 6977
e *libraryarts@solihull.gov.uk*
w **solihull.gov.uk/heritage**
You can find out more information about the material that is held here via the Heritage Gateway online catalogue, which you can explore at **https://www2.calmview.co.uk/solihull/**.

Staffordshire Archives And Heritage

a **Staffordshire History Centre, Eastgate Street, Stafford ST16 2LZ**
t 01785 278379
e *staffordshire.record.office@staffordshire.gov.uk*
w **https://www.staffordshirehistory.org.uk**
The archive service also runs Stoke-on-Trent City Archives, which is located at the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery (Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 3DW; 01782 238420; *stoke.archives@stoke.gov.uk*).

Walsall Archives

a **Lichfield Street Hub, Lichfield Street, Walsall WS1 1TR**
t 01922 652212
e *localhistorycentre@walsall.gov.uk*
w **go.walsall.gov.uk/localhistorycentre**
The archive preserves material from the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall and its predecessors.

Warwickshire County Record Office

a **Priory Park, Cape Road, Warwick CV34 4JS**
t 01926 738959
e *recordoffice@warwickshire.gov.uk*
w **heritage.warwickshire.gov.uk/warwickshire-county-record-office/**
The website includes a guide for family historians at **tinyurl.com/heri-warks-guide**. There's also **windowsonwarwickshire.org.uk** presenting over 10,000 items from archives and museums.

Wolverhampton City Archives

a **Molineux Hotel Building, Whitmore Hill, Wolverhampton WV1 1SF**
t 01902 552480
w **www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk/about-wolverhampton-archives/**
Collections here include electoral registers, directories, photographs and local newspapers such as the *Wolverhampton Chronicle*.

Worcestershire Archive And Archaeology Service

a **The Hive, Sawmill Walk, The Butts, Worcester WR1 3PD**
t 01905 822866
w **explorethepast.co.uk**
The holdings here include parish and nonconformist material.

GROUPS & SOCIETIES

Coventry Family History Society

w **covfhs.org**
Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of every month at the Old Coventrians Rugby Football Club, Tile Hill Lane.

Malvern Family History Society

w **mfhs.org.uk**
Based in the spa town of Malvern, this society has indexed local parish registers and put the records on **fhs-online.co.uk**.

Midland Ancestors

w **midland-ancestors.uk**
The main group for Birmingham, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire runs a Family History Centre and FamilySearch Affiliate Library inside the Birmingham & Midland Institute in Margaret Street, Birmingham.

Nuneaton And North Warwickshire Family History Society

w **nnwfhs.org.uk**
The free-to-view resources on the society's website include searchable parish records.

Rugby Family History Group

w **rugbyfhg.club**
The group runs talks, and help sessions at Rugby Library.

WEBSITES

Black Country History

w **blackcountryhistory.org**
Search the collections of archives and museums across the region.

Worcestershire Regiment WW1

w **bit.ly/worcs-regiment-ww1**
Details of more than 50,000 soldiers are available here.

A scrapbook from India, 1832–1840

Claire Marris from Whitby Museum shares a scrapbook revealing a British woman's life in India Interview By Rosemary Collins

The rich history of Whitby on the Yorkshire coast includes industries such as fishing, whaling and jet jewellery, and inspiring Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897). The collections in Whitby Museum Library and Archive tell the story of the town from ancient times to the present. Among the books and documents is a beautifully illustrated scrapbook depicting a British woman's life in India during the rule of the East India Company. Archive Development Officer Claire Marris tells us more about this fascinating scrapbook and its creator, Isabella Wells.

What Is The Scrapbook?

In 2021 one of our volunteers, Janet Kukk, found a scrapbook in our archives filled with beautiful portrayals of India. There was a signature on some of the illustrations that looked like I or J Wells.

Carrying out more research, Janet discovered that the scrapbook was donated by a woman called Beatrice Chapman and created by her great aunt, Isabella Wells.

Isabella Wells (née Simpson) was born on 11 August 1797 in Whitby. On 16 April 1827, she married Charles Hotham Wells. He had a high-status role as deputy advocate-general of Bombay (now Mumbai), advising the government of the British-administered Bombay Presidency on legal matters. The couple lived in India during the latter end of the British East India Company's rule.

Captain Wells died on 5 October 1840 of Gujarat fever and is buried at St Thomas' Cathedral, Mumbai. Isabella returned to England and divided her time between Whitby and London, living with widowed sisters. She died in Whitby, aged 87, on 20 September 1878, and is buried at St Mary's Church, Whitby.

What Do The Artworks In The Scrapbook Tell Us About Isabella's Life?

The illustrations are warm and charming, with bright, vibrant colours. Isabella appeared to have lived a privileged life. Some of the drawings show what we believe to be her and Charles riding an elephant or sitting in native and European *gharries* (carriages) drawn by bullocks. The attendees are all wearing *dhotis*, a loose, skirt-like loincloth.

It is evident that she had house *hamals* (servants) and mixed with various religions and cultures; Jews, Parsees and Hindus. Several pictures show women carrying items on their heads, and military figures in different regiments.

When you look more closely at some of the drawings the background scene is intriguing.

One example is a picture of a grenadier orderly standing proud in his red military uniform, no footwear, and in the background is a row of guards holding bayonets standing to attention and their tents billowing in the soft breeze, which are shadowed by palm trees and mountain skyline.

This was a time of oppression, economic disruption and political instability in India. It was evident that the country's culture and resources were being exploited, showing a decline in traditional industries. However, the pictures do not give this impression. Possibly Isabella's life was sheltered from the unrest.

This was a time of oppression, economic disruption and political instability

Do You Know Anything Else About Isabella?

She was the granddaughter of Wakefield Simpson, a wealthy Whitby banker. We have documents relating to the Simpson family, including an apprentice geometry book created by Wakefield's father Henry Simpson in 1711, when he was 17. It is beautifully illustrated, so we can see where Isabella's artistic genes came from.

In fact, to showcase Isabella's pictures further, I would like to put together an exhibition in the library, with information boards, in the hope of inspiring additional research. We think this scrapbook would be a perfect project for individuals who have a keen interest in Indian history and/or art. It would be interesting to analyse the pictures, and research the backgrounds of some of the people that she drew – some of their names are included, providing a starting point.

Someone could also investigate the couple's lifestyle – where they lived and the circles of people they would have associated with, and the role her husband held and his family history. For example, Captain Wells' father was the drawing

Visit Us

Whitby Museum Library And Archive
a Pannett Park, Whitby YO21 1RE
t 01947 602908
e *library@whitbymuseum.org.uk*
w **whitbymuseum.org.uk/research-archive/library/**

Whitby Museum is open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am–4.30pm, and the library and archive is open Tuesday to Friday, 10am–4.30pm. If you have a research inquiry, please send it by email in advance of your visit.

master to the royal family and to the Military College at Addiscombe, and is also believed to have been a friend of painter JMW Turner.

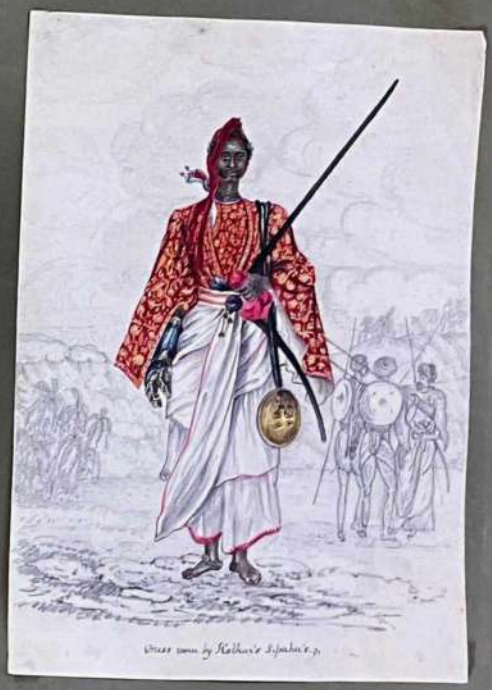
What Other Items Are In Your Collections?

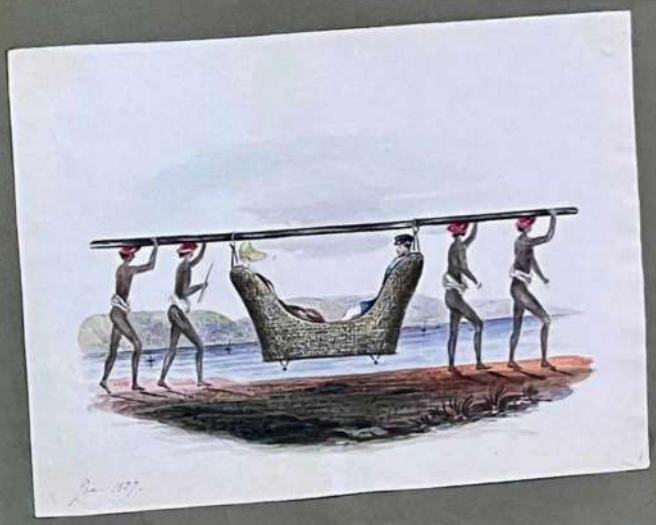
One of our main aims is to support the community by helping with family history inquiries, but we hold numerous other resources relating to Whitby and the surrounding boroughs. For example, we have every issue of the newspaper the *Whitby Gazette* between its launch in 1854 and 2014, and they have been digitised for public access in the library.

We also possess muster rolls which record a wealth of information about crews and ships, and offer an insight into merchant seamen's lives. These have been digitised too, and are freely available online at the museum's site (**whitbymuseum.org.uk/muster-rolls-lookup/**).

There are documents and collections in the archive relating to all manner of industries: shipping, fishing, whaling, jet, mining and brickmaking. There is material connected to interesting public figures such as explorers like Captain James Cook and William Scoresby, and Victorian political protester Rev. Francis Haydn Williams.

We also have information relating to lifeboats, geology, religious establishments, Whitby Urban Council, school logbooks and registers, wills and deeds, letters and diaries, and countless books. We also hold oral history files with interviews relating to Whitby, discussing such topics as herring fishing and lifeboats. Readers can learn more about our holdings at **whitbymuseum.org.uk/category/library-archives-blog/**.





REVIEWS

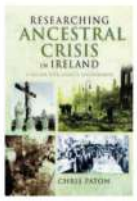
The latest books on history and genealogy, plus apps, podcasts and websites

IRISH GENEALOGY

Researching Ancestral Crisis In Ireland
A Guide For Family Historians

Chris Paton
Pen & Sword, 166 pages, £15.99

Among the photographs reproduced in the book are *(above)* Crumlin Road Gaol in Belfast, *(below, left to right)* Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary, a former Magdalene laundry on Seán McDermott Street in Dublin, and a memorial to four IRA volunteers executed by the Free State Army in Kilmainham Gaol in 1922



Over recent decades, Ireland has had to face the often horrifying treatment of its most vulnerable people, usually unmarried pregnant women and their children, at the hands of largely religious, but also state-run institutions. 'Mother and baby homes', Magdalene laundries and industrial schools have entered Irish vocabulary and become the subject of commissions of investigation sanctioned by the Irish government, and lengthy reports.

Family historians related to those who were born on the fringes of society will have met impenetrable brick walls when seeking institutional records for their ancestors. This research guide from regular *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* contributor Chris Paton provides a fairly comprehensive account of the institutions that dealt with and housed the pregnant, poor and criminal, dating from the 17th up to the later 20th century, detailing what records were created and where they might be found.

Paton's book is an all-Ireland publication, documenting the common institutions that existed before partition and subsequent developments on both sides of the border during the 20th century. After dispensing with the standard genealogical sources, he focuses on those who faced a challenging life, the "crisis" in the title, usually because of poverty, crime or the moral rectitude of the churches and the state. Under the headings 'Family Relationships' (births, marriages and deaths), 'Law and Order', 'Poverty and Health' and 'Them and Us' (divisions in society), Paton sets out a history of the law and institutions, identifying surviving records and case studies.

Even if your forebears don't fall into this category, the book is worth reading to understand how those who governed the island of Ireland treated the vulnerable, poor and marginalised over several centuries.

Nicola Morris is a genealogist based in Dublin and the director of Timeline Research (timeline.ie). She regularly contributes to the research for *Who Do You Think You Are?*

CHRIS PATON/PEN & SWORD

DIGITAL PICKS

Rosemary Collins highlights three digital resources that caught our eye this month

VIDEO

Researching Your House History

tinyurl.com/yt-researching-house-history

In this one-hour video, genealogist Nick Barratt talks to house historian Melanie Backe-Hansen and design historian Deborah Sugg Ryan about house history and their work on the BBC Two series *A House Through Time*, covering such topics as the enduring legacy of slavery and the history of home design. Free.

NEWSLETTER

Writing Family History

writingfamilyhistory.substack.com/

Family historian and author Alison Baxter regularly shares stories from her research into her tree in her email newsletter. In one recent edition, she discusses an uncle who died serving with Bomber Command in the Second World War, while in another, she talks about a relative who survived a catastrophic avalanche in Newfoundland in 1912. Free.

PODCAST

London History

londonguidedwalks.co.uk/all-episodes/

London tour guide Hazel Baker presents this podcast about the capital's past. The episodes have explored fascinating pieces of London history such as Endell Street Hospital – a First World War military hospital that was run entirely by women – and what the items found in the Thames by mudlarkers tell us about Londoners' lives in the 17th century. Free.

FAMILY ARCHIVE

Sum Of Us
A History Of The UK In Data

SOCIAL HISTORY

Georgina Sturge
Bridge Street Press, 384 pages, £25

From the early years of the national census in the 1800s, to narratives of social change, race and politics in modern times, *Sum of Us* takes in a 200-year sweep of UK history, showcasing national trends through the lens of public statistics and official records.

This is no dry, technical tome, but an engaging account of UK life: family historians will find much here both to interest and inform. While the various national censuses are the main focus, the range of sources mentioned – including Mass Observation diaries, taxation records and poverty maps – offers a plethora of jumping-off points to explore.

It was disappointing to see occasional inaccuracies, such as in the role of the census enumerators (who, contrary to popular belief, did not write down householders' responses by dictation). Nonetheless, this book covers a formidable scope, does an excellent job of drawing human narratives from the numbers, and encourages a critical approach, highlighting how statistics can either illuminate or cloud our judgement, depending on how they are used.

The author sums up brilliantly in declaring that "statistics are not dry or cold; they are bursting with life" – surely a call to genealogists everywhere to embrace statistical stories in our research.

Dr Sophie Kay is a professional genealogist and geneticist at Khronicle (khronicle.co.uk), and the specialist DNA tutor for the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies (ihgs.ac.uk)

Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

Lady Pamela Berry
Passion, Politics And Power

FAMILY BIOGRAPHY

Harriet Cullen
Unicorn, 224 pages, £25

This book is a fascinating picture of someone who was at the heart of what are sometimes called 'the Four Estates' during a time of vast social and political change. Lady Pamela Smith was the daughter of politician and lawyer FE Smith, the 1st Earl of Birkenhead, and married William Berry, who became Viscount Camrose and owner of the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph*. The author, her daughter, has had access to many unpublished diaries, photo albums and correspondence that comment upon events that are now part of history. Most of the people Pamela corresponded with became household names, and she probably influenced events via her husband's newspapers and her associations with politicians.

The book paints a picture of both the subject's private and public life, illuminating a time when for many women their 'job' was often seen as being there solely to support their husband by hosting social functions. By the end of the book I felt that I too had participated in the social whirl.

This photo of Pamela in her first drawing room was taken in 1936, the year she married William Berry

Gill Grocott, Aylesbury
Gill researches landscapes for Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (bucksgardenstrust.org.uk)

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e ***wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk***

TV & RADIO

Jonathan Wright previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

Who Do You Think You Are?

BBC One and BBC iPlayer
Tuesday 20 May

As ever, the latest series of *WDYTYA?* has delivered unexpected stories and emotional moments aplenty. And happily, many more revelations lie ahead because there are still four brand new shows to enjoy. In episode five, it's the turn of Aisling Bea to journey into the past. As filming begins, the actor, screenwriter and comedian is heavily pregnant, and keen to learn more about her roots so that she can pass stories down the years. Her research reveals much about Irish history and culture, as well as the role of women in Irish society down the years.

Turning to Fred Sirieix, the maître d'hôtel and TV presenter heads back to his French homeland, where he's especially interested in the experiences of his maternal grandparents. Can he confirm family stories of the couple escaping Nazi-occupied France for Free France? Fred also learns about his great grandfather, Léonard Bordas, who survived some of the most brutal battles of the First World War.

Fred Sirieix returns to France in the episode of *WDYTYA?* that airs on 27 May

Singer–songwriter and actor Will Young also researches the wartime experiences of one of his forebears, his grandfather Digby Young, who died before Will was born. Digby often found it hard to hold down a job and, Will senses, was regarded within the family as a bit of a disappointment. But Will learns that he was a truly remarkable man, a bomber pilot in the Second World War and, latterly, a prisoner of war who survived against the odds. Will also discovers that he's related to one of British history's most notorious villains, with a royal connection.

In the current series' finale, actor, writer and comedian Diane Morgan sets aside her clueless Philomena Cunk persona to go in search of some historical truths. The story behind a 'death penny', a memorial plaque issued to the next of kin of servicemen and servicewomen who died during the First World War, bookends her episode. Diane's research also touches on Manchester's textile industry in the 19th century, a relation nicknamed 'German Charlie', and a Scottish 4x great grandmother who took no nonsense from the fathers of her children.

Katy Canales, Hill Top property curator, tends to Beatrix Potter's dollhouse

Hidden Treasures Of The National Trust

BBC Two and BBC iPlayer
Began Friday 16 May

Pete Tasker is the head gardener at Hill Top, Beatrix Potter's farmhouse in the Lake District. His job requires a very particular skill: staying patient when yet again being mistaken for Peter Rabbit's foe, Mr McGregor.

Pete is just one of the stars of the returning *Hidden Treasures*, the fly-on-the-wall series that follows life at different National Trust locations. Conservation is a recurring theme. At Hill Top, for example, Potter's dollhouse and its contents, which feature in *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*, need some care and attention if they're to be preserved for future generations.

There are also mysteries to solve. At the modest Dorset home of TE Lawrence, an enigmatic painting shows a young soldier at the seaside. Is this a portrait of a young Lawrence of Arabia?

Britain Under The Nazis: The Forgotten Occupation

Channel 4
Began Saturday 17 May

In June 1940, following defeat in France, the prime minister Winston Churchill decided it was impossible to defend the Channel Islands from the Germans. As a result, roughly 69,000 Britons found themselves living in occupied territory. At first, there seemed to be the promise of a light-touch 'model' occupation, but as the war progressed Nazi rule became tougher and more doctrinaire. The residents of Guernsey, Jersey and the smaller islands found themselves subject to acute food shortages, persecution, antisemitism and deportation. The Nazis fortified the islands, and established forced-labour camps. Liberation didn't arrive until 9 May 1945 because the Allies, determined to win the wider European war, didn't prioritise taking back such a small amount of territory.

It's a period remembered in a two-part documentary that draws on eyewitness accounts, and explores how the occupation caused divisions that have carried down the decades.

Boom Town: How Merthyr Made The World

BBC One Wales and BBC iPlayer
June

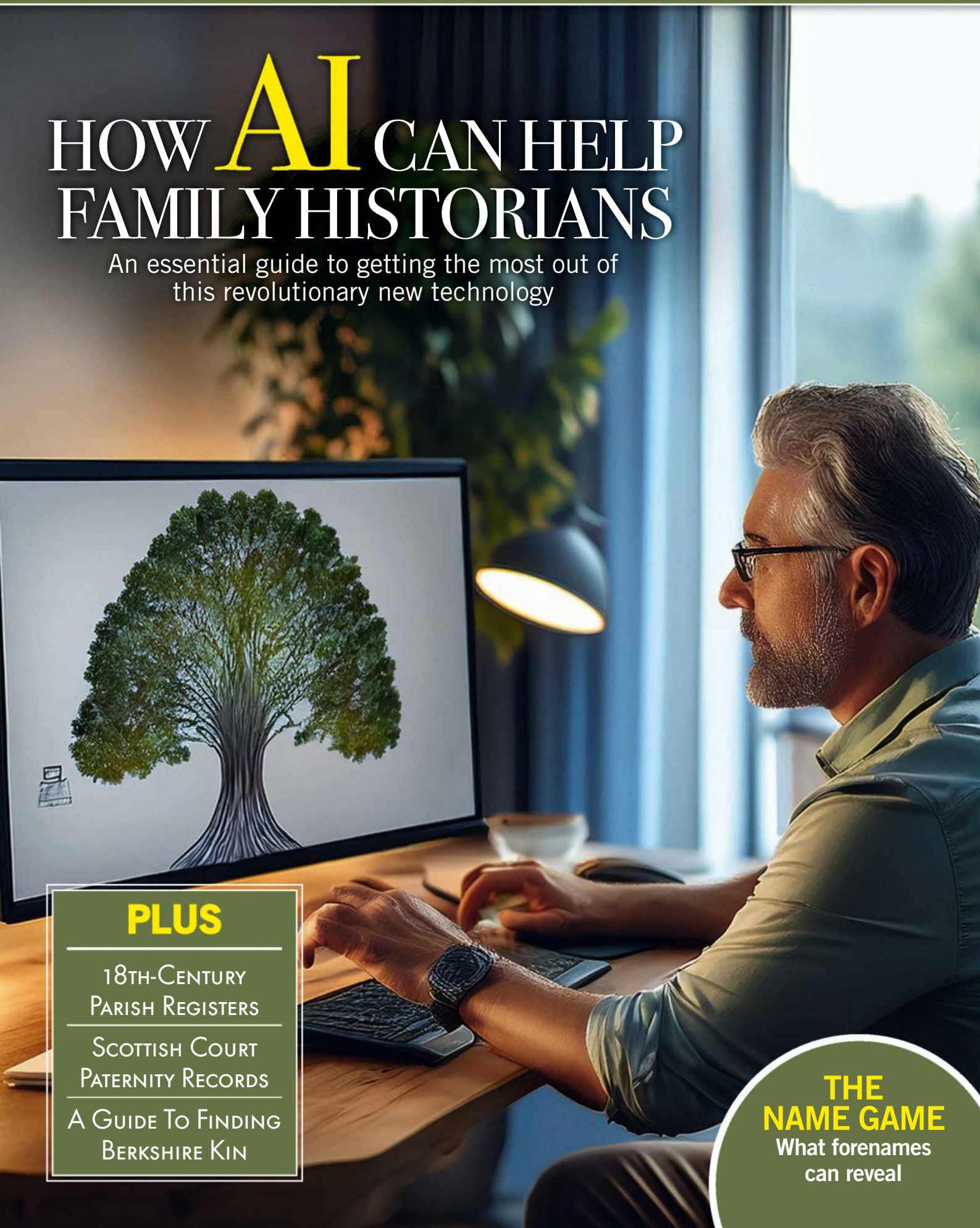
As part of programming to mark the bicentenary of Cyfarthfa Castle, the vast family home built by ironmaster William Crawshay II, *Boom Town* looks at how Merthyr Tydfil was once central to Britain's industrial revolution. Intriguingly, the documentary, presented by Steffan Powell, promises to use new technology and AI to visualise the past.

Also in the same season, the two-part *Merthyr Made Me* (BBC Radio Wales and BBC Sounds) sees Jonny Owen explore Merthyr's story through the family histories of four people who either live in or come from the town.

BBC/WALL TO WALL/STEPHEN PERRY | NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES/ANNAPURNA MELLOR

NEXT MONTH

Our July issue goes on sale on **Tuesday 17 June**



HOW AI CAN HELP FAMILY HISTORIANS

An essential guide to getting the most out of this revolutionary new technology

PLUS

18th-Century Parish Registers

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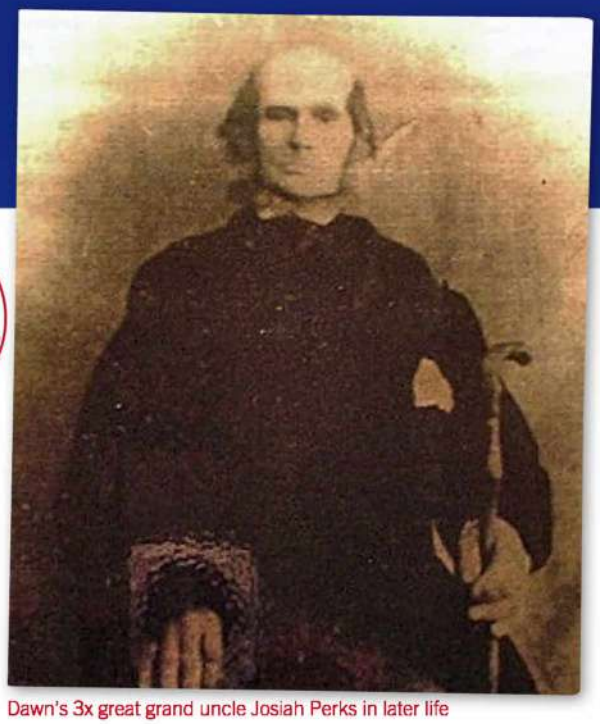
THE NAME GAME

What forenames can reveal

'Australia Transformed Josiah's Life'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Dawn Robinson-Walsh is fascinated by a transported relation who turned his back on criminality to become a model citizen. By **Gail Dixon**



Dawn's 3x great grand uncle Josiah Perks in later life

A loud knock was heard on the door of an austere terraced home in Birmingham's Gun Quarter. It was August 1826 and the parish constables had come for Josiah Perks, a lad of 18 who had already served three months in gaol for stealing coats.

This time Josiah was arraigned at Warwick Assizes for breaking into a house and taking 40s. His family must have been devastated when he was convicted and sentenced to death.

The judgment was commuted to transportation for life, which meant that Josiah would never be allowed to leave Australia. He was the 3x great grand uncle of Dawn Robinson-Walsh.

She discovered Josiah in 2023 while searching the records on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). "He stood out among my respectable ancestors as a 'bad boy', which made him super-interesting."

Josiah was born in St Martin's Parish, Birmingham, in 1808 to Richard and Ann Perks. Richard was a skilled metalworker, and Ann raised their family of 12 children. "They were very religious, and Josiah was christened into the Baptist Church at the city's Cannon Street Meeting House."

Dawn has been able to discover a wealth of detail about him from the website Australian Royalty (**https://australianroyalty.net.au**), which focuses on individuals who lived in New South Wales between 1788, when the colony was created, and 1920.

She also found Robert Hughes' book *The Fatal Shore* (Collins Harvill, 1987) to be a brilliant history of convict life.

"Josiah was probably held on a prison ship called a hulk before sailing from Portsmouth, Hampshire, on the *Marquis of Hastings*. Hughes describes the hulks as ferocious places of 'raggedness, filth and starvation'.

"Convicts were usually held in irons, and gawked and jeered at as they boarded the ship. Did Josiah even get the chance to say goodbye to his family?"

The arduous sailing took about four months, and Josiah arrived in Sydney on 31 July 1827. He was assigned to work as a labourer for Rev. T Hassall who lived in Camden, Sydney. A year later, he was listed as a skilled blacksmith.

"Josiah was fortunate to be employed by Rev. Hassall, who appeared to treat his workers with respect and compassion. While transportation was a punishment, there was also an element of rehabilitation involved."

In March 1832 Josiah married Isabella Brett, a Dublin-born mantua (dress) maker convicted of theft; transported convicts were encouraged to marry because it seemed to help them settle into their new life. The couple went on to have nine children, four of whom died in infancy.

Josiah earned his conditional pardon in 1842, and was a free man in Australia. Soon after that the family moved to Boorowa, a wilderness 200 miles south-west of Sydney. He established his own blacksmith's shop, and bought 10 acres of land.

"The area was known for lawlessness and boundary disputes, so it can't have been an easy life. The family clearly thrived, because Josiah owned 470 acres in Boorowa by the 1860s. I'd love to know if he wrote letters home, and if his parents and siblings knew of his transformation."

Isabella and Josiah lived into their 60s, and died in 1870 and 1871 respectively. The couple are buried together in Langs Creek Anglican Cemetery, and have a plaque on their grave.

Dawn is inspired by the way that Josiah became a law-abiding, hard-working citizen.

"Some convicts continued their life of crime and became heavy drinkers. Josiah seemed to mature and make a decent life for himself, which shows strength of character. He probably had a better life in New South Wales than if he'd stayed in the poverty-stricken back streets of Birmingham. Australia changed Josiah into someone his mother could be proud of."

The family clearly thrived, because Josiah owned 470 acres by the 1860s

DAWN ROBINSON-WALSH is a retired teacher living in Hartland, Devon. She has been researching her family history for three years

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